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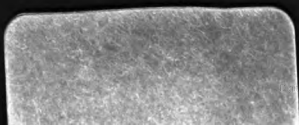
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PERSONAL
PIETY





PERSONAL PIETY

ALEXANDER STRAHAN, PUBLISHER

LONDON, 148 Strand

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PERSONAL PIETY

A HELP TO CHRISTIANS TO WALK
WORTHY OF THEIR CALLING

By C. T.



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INTRODUCTION.



WE all know the importance of example. The instinct of imitation is seen in the child, long before he is capable of any other instruction ; and, in after-life, the same propensity is discovered in the almost universal conformity of our morals and habits to those of the people around us. It is very humiliating, but we must see things as they are, and there is no disguising the fact, that the gospel has been, and is, shorn of its power, not so much by any defect in the learning and eloquence of the pulpit, as by the sad discrepancies which the world detects between the teachings of the Sabbath and our conduct during the rest of the week.

This remark applies to the ministry and laity alike. I know how prone men are to prescribe to ministers a standard of holiness nothing short of perfection. This proceeds not only from a cavilling spirit, but from a desire to have pastors to whom, in the hour of need, they can say, "*Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.*"

Nor can any talents, however brilliant, qualify a man for the office of a preacher, unless he have, not only virtue, but a reputation for virtue. After all, however, God has nowhere drawn this distinction between ministers and other men. He requires the same holiness in all. And it is the want of this silent but resistless eloquence of holy living, which, more than anything else, far more than all the impotent sophistries of infidelity, has hindered, and is hindering, the triumphs of the truth.

Who has not felt the power of simple, unaffected, consistent piety? Which of us but can recall cases where Christians of very humble intellects and attainments have yet, by purity and integrity, commanded universal and undissembled respect, not only for themselves, but for the religion they profess? "Ye are my witnesses," says the Saviour. And it will fare with the gospel as with any other cause. The jury will listen with jealousy and suspicion to the pleadings of official advocates. It is to the testimony of the witnesses they will look, and by this will their verdict be decided. This is the reason why the maxims of the world are so much more influential than the maxims of the gospel. The children of this world are consistent. The votaries of pleasure, wealth, ambition, do not contradict their principles in their lives. But

the children of light—what a melancholy contrast between their conduct, and the faith by which they profess to be governed !

• We are sometimes surprised, and even staggered, when we consider the little progress which the gospel has made, and is making, in the world. In fact, however, there is no cause for surprise. For if we examine the history of the church so miscalled, what is it ? The annals of our race contain no pages so dark, so stained with cruelty and blood.

Even at this day, what is the character of too many of those ecclesiastical bodies which arrogate the title of The True Church ? Is not an external organisation substituted for Christ ? And the very vices which are assailed most directly by the gospel, pride, the love of pre-eminence, the lust of power—the very passions against which the entire spirit of the gospel wages an internecine war—are not these vices and passions, and in their most arrogant forms, sanctified in those churches ?

When we reflect upon these mournful facts, can we wonder that the religion of Jesus has not won more rapid and illustrious victories ? Beautifully simple, and yet irresistibly potent—“fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners”—were the first churches. Those churches were not bodies artificially framed to

exalt a class of men into a spiritual aristocracy, and to collect and wield a worldly power for their own aggrandisement. The first churches were not framed at all. They grew, naturally and necessarily, out of the deepest wants of our nature. They were the free, spontaneous, instinctive associations of those whose hearts had been changed by the Holy Spirit, and whose bosoms glowed with the love of Christ. It was impossible to keep such kindred spirits apart. Their souls were melted and at once fused together in a brotherhood of faith and love and loyalty to Him who had loved them unto death.

No argument is necessary to shew that the moral and spiritual power of such churches must have been great. Faith, love, inward sanctity, these were the elements of their piety. Self-abnegation was the very spirit of their mission. Catching the full inspiration of the cross, and breathing an atmosphere yet warm with the benedictions of their ascended Lord, they consecrated time and talents and property to a work, simple indeed, but infinitely transcending all the enterprises of kings and heroes. They lived to do good, to regenerate and bless the earth. No wonder that such bodies were centres of an influence which could not be resisted. But what utter and unutterable degeneracy in many of the bodies called churches now! A sacramental

religion, forms, rites, creeds, "linen decencies," apocryphal successions, gifts invisible to man and to God himself, puerile manipulations, mystical and cabalistic virtues, and sacred enclosures where salvation is conferred by machinery,—these are the glory of such churches. Can the gospel be advanced by these figments of the dark ages? What are such churches good for, but to delude the masses, and subjugate them to priestly dominion? "All this clamour about church," says Dr Arnold, "is only a clamour about priest." Nor is this spiritual ambition confined to any church. With his idiomatic terseness, Milton long ago remarked with great truth, that "*Presbyter is only priest written large.*"

The secret of the power put forth by the first churches is an open secret. It was not the number nor talents of the preachers. Nor did they possess any light, nor were they animated by any promises of spiritual aid which are denied to us. It was their elevated practical piety which secured their noble triumphs over the pride of kings and the counsels of rulers—over the scoffs of philosophers and the malignant passions of the multitude.

How simple and energetic was the faith of those apostolic men! What ardent love! What immolation of self on the great altar of the

Redeemer's kingdom ! What fervent charity ! What uncompromising obedience ! What a profound sense of personal responsibility ! What indefatigable zeal ! What loyalty ! so that it was their motto, "*First a Christian, and then a man*"—all other relations being subordinated to the great allegiance. In a word, what a stern, inflexible fidelity to truth and integrity and honour ! this being the common proverb then, when one would affirm the utter impossibility of a thing, "You might as well hope to move a Christian from his principles."

If the world is ever to be converted, the churches must not only be restored to their original simplicity of organisation, but to the type of their original piety. The Reformation in the days of Luther was glorious ; but a reformation far more glorious is needed—a reformation in the characters and lives of Christians. The church is sometimes spoken of as an abstraction, and we are told of its unity and its sanctity. But in the New Testament a church is no mysterious nonentity. It is a collection of real living men and women. The character of any church is the aggregate character of its members. To suppose that the church can confer holiness on the individuals composing it, is simply absurd. It is the faith and purity and personal piety of the saints of God which give

all its holiness to a church. And it is as these graces are quickened and invigorated, that the word of the Lord will have free course and be glorified.

Some persons have wished ~~that~~ ministers were now endowed with the power of working miracles ; but we do not want miracles. We have the truth and the consciences of men. Let the truth only be enforced by the holy lives of Christians, and results will follow more noble than any which could be wrought by the most brilliant miracles. On every side we hear of the danger to be apprehended from the mistranslation of this or that Greek word : but all the errors of all the interpreters of the sacred books are harmless when compared with the falsification of the Scriptures—their spirit and doctrine—in the covetousness and worldliness and immoralities of the professed disciples of Jesus. We live in a busy world and a stirring age, and people trouble themselves very little about Hebrew points and Greek texts ; but the “living epistles are known and read of all men.” Faith, assurance, orthodoxy, spirituality. Very well. Those around us, however, do not comprehend these things. But they do comprehend honesty, and purity, and disinterestedness, and truth, and charity. And it is by these virtues that our light is so to shine “that men, seeing our

good works, may glorify our Father who is in heaven."

It is not to be denied that the world is censorious and unjust towards the people of God. "John the Baptist came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." Still, when we consider the depravity of the human heart, the marvel is that the world is as lenient as it is to the faults of professed Christians. "What do you more than others?" The world has a right to expect more of us. "Ye are the light of the world." Is it surprising that men are shocked if they see darkness where light ought to be? "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." What an idea does the Holy Spirit here give of the position and duty, dignity and responsibility of a Christian! The allusion of the apostle is to a lighthouse; and it recalls to my mind an incident related by a distinguished traveller, the application of which to the subject in hand is easily made.

"Being at Calais," says the writer, "I climbed up into the lighthouse and conversed with the

keeper. 'Suppose,' said I, 'that one of these lights should go out?' 'Never! impossible!' he cried, with a sort of consternation at the bare hypothesis. 'Sir,' said he, pointing to the ocean, 'yonder, where nothing can be seen, there are ships going by to every part of the world. If to-night one of my burners were to go out, within six months would come a letter, perhaps from India, perhaps from America, perhaps from some place I never heard of, saying, on such a night, at such an hour, the light of Calais burned dim; the watchman neglected his post, and vessels were in danger. Ah, sir, sometimes, in the dark nights, in the stormy weather, I look out to sea, and feel as if the eye of the whole world were looking at my light. Go out! Burn dim! Oh, never!'"

May He "who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks," arm us all with a vigilance ever wakeful as that of this guardian of the French beacon! May we ever feel that the eyes of God, and of the whole world, are upon us! And, in eternity, may we not only see that no souls have perished through our faithlessness, but may we be among those who, sustained and triumphing by almighty grace, having turned many to righteousness, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars for ever and ever!

CHAPTER I

FEW CHRISTIANS IN THE WORLD, AND THE
CAUSE OF IT.

WHY have there been, and why are there now, comparatively, so few Christians in the world? The number of Christ's true friends is small in comparison with the ranks of His enemies. Near two-thirds of the race are pagans; a fifth part are Mohammedans; only a sixth part are nominally Christians. Of this sixth part, by far the greater proportion are buried under the darkness of the Greek and Romish churches; and even in Protestant countries to how small a number is the true Church of Christ reduced! In every country, city, town, village, and neighbourhood, the multitude swarm the road to perdition, while only a few are on their way to Zion. Perhaps no community has ever yet been brought wholly to submit to Christ. How rare a thing to find, anywhere, the disciples of Christ in the majority!

Nor is this all. Many portions of the earth

that were once reclaimed to Christ are now lost. Paganism and Mohammedanism now prevail where Christianity was once in the ascendant. In many of the countries of modern Europe, where the Reformation once flourished, infidelity and Romanism have the sway.

Now, why this appalling disproportion between the dominion of Christ and the prince of darkness? What is it that so mightily impedes the progress of heaven-born Christianity? What restricts her dominion to so small a proportion of the earth? Why are there so many millions in Christendom with whom the gospel is powerless? Why, amid all the divinely-appointed means for the world's conversion, do so few become real Christians? In our very midst there are thousands who do not believe Christianity is divine. Under the full blaze of the written and preached truth, infidelity and contempt of the gospel stalk abroad with demoniac confidence.

Now, why, it is most important to inquire, is the gospel so ineffective? Where lies the main obstacle to the progress of Christianity? It has now been eighteen centuries since the atonement was made, and the Spirit in His fulness given. Why, during this long period, has Christianity made so few and such partial triumphs? For the glory of God and the good of the world,

the cause of this comparative failure of the gospel should be found out, pondered, and removed.

The restricted sway of our holy religion is not owing to any limitation or inefficacy in the atonement of Christ. That removes all the penal obstacles in the way of man's salvation, and embraces in its provisions the entire race.

Nor is the comparatively small number of Christians in the world to be ascribed to any absence or limitation in the promised Spirit. He is as really present, and is as willing and as able to convict, convert, and sanctify now, as He was on the day of Pentecost. True, there is something on our part that restrains and prevents that full measure of His influences being communicated.

Nor can the great evil we are deploring be ascribed to any want of adaptation and power in the gospel. That, consisting of an atoning cross and a renewing Spirit, is now, as it was when first preached, "the power of God unto salvation, unto every one that believeth." It is in itself divinely sufficient to convert the world, thoroughly and speedily. It has lost none of its virgin freshness and power.

Nor can the tardy progress of Christianity be resolved into the sovereignty of God. To say that the conversion of the world lingers, that

souls at the rate of thirty millions a year pass into eternity uncleansed, and consequently unsaved by the blood of Christ, as the result of God's sovereignty, were a reflection on His throne and character. He is indeed a Sovereign. His decrees and foreknowledge do extend to and control everything in the universe; but they interfere not with our freedom, and therefore do not relieve us of the responsibility for the limited spread of Christianity. In this thing there is a mystery; but it is the mystery of selfishness and uncaring inactivity on the part of the friends of God. Had the successive generations of professed Christians fallen in with the divine arrangement for the conversion of the world, long ago "the heathen would have been given to Christ for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession."

Nor, further, is the disproportionately small number of Christians in the world attributable to any want of logical evidence for the truth of Christianity. No other subject claiming human belief has a hundredth part of such proofs. Numerous miracles, with their appeals to the senses, prophecies becoming facts as the stream of time has rolled on, the character and precepts of Christ, and history with her thousand chapters, attest with the clearness of a sunbeam that Christianity, in the abstract, is the ambassadress

of Heaven, and the benefactress of earth. In the way of documentary evidence, our religion has fought her battles, and been victorious. No use now to write books and preach sermons to prove that the gospel in itself is from God. There are no more proofs that the sun in mid-heaven is the work of God, than there are that the gospel, as it is revealed in the Scriptures, is from Him. Mankind no more doubt the divine origin of the latter than they do that of the former. Hence our once mighty Butlers and Paleys are becoming obsolete. Not one man in ten thousand is kept from being a Christian from scepticism as to the divinity of the Bible itself.

Nor has the gospel been so restricted in its diffusion because there has not been time to bring the world under its influence. Eighteen centuries have elapsed since Christ completed the atonement, and gave the command to His disciples to convert the world. During the sixty years succeeding the day of Pentecost, the first Christians, with no more powerful gospel than we have, without any greater measure of divine influence than God is willing to vouchsafe to us, and without many of the advantages that we have for spreading the empire of Christ, did more in Christianising the world than has been done since. Oh, had the unadorned mantles of

these New-Testament Elijahs fallen upon all succeeding Elishas, the sun in his journey around our globe would not, perhaps, shine upon a nation nor a tribe that would not now be reflecting Christ's image and honouring Christ's name. There has been ample time for the grand experiment.

Nor, furthermore, can the tardy progress of Christianity be referred, mainly, to the many doctrinal errors that have prevailed. These have hindered the coming of Christ's kingdom. The Scriptures and the history of the Church shew that there is a connexion between one's belief and his life. Fundamental errors concerning the atonement of Christ, the nature and necessity of the Spirit's influence, the nature and necessity of regeneration, the depravity of the human heart, have been and are now mighty barriers in the way of the world's conversion, and should with all haste be banished from the earth. We are unwavering advocates for a sound creed. In another connexion, we could shew that so long as errors exist concerning one cardinal feature of the gospel, it is vastly important for us to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." Let our theology be pure. In the interpretation of the Scriptures let us be strict constructionists. Let every Bible truth, in its revealed proportions, be clung to as

the miser clings to his gold. But, after all, the professing world are more scriptural in creed than they are in practice. They believe much more truth than they exemplify. Doctrinal heresies, though a great, are not the greatest difficulty in the way of the world's conversion.

Nor does the gospel fall short of its designed influence, because mankind have grown more depraved. When, at first, Christianity spread, in a few years, over the whole Roman empire, mankind were utterly depraved; they are not more than that now. No doubt the world have, during the last fifty years, upon the whole, grown better. At no former period were mankind more favourable to Christianity than they are now. Why, then, we raise the question again, are there such vast regions abroad, and so many millions at home, unsubdued by the cross of Christ?

Is it owing to a paucity of the means of grace? In heathen lands, and in many portions of Christendom, the absence of Christianity is doubtless attributable to the absence of the appliances of grace; and hence, with all speed, the churches should convey to such destitute regions the means of salvation. But where these means are enjoyed in redundancy, what crowds throng the way to hell! In almost every family are to be found the Scriptures of God. In the city and in the country, in almost every neighbourhood,

there is a house of worship, in which resounds, Sabbath after Sabbath, the gospel from faithful ministers. The press daily multiplies good books by millions. All churches have, by scores, their societies for the promotion of the different interests of the gospel. Every church holds yearly its protracted meeting. Sabbath schools in every direction are in operation. In the family, and in the social circle, ten thousand professors daily pray with and for the irreligious : and yet, amid all these heavenly instrumentalities, a vast majority live and die in unbelief. Around us are hundreds who are sermon-proof. In very many cases the children of professing parents are infidels. True, these agencies are blessed to the conversion of many ; but the number they save is discouragingly small compared with the number on whom they are brought to bear in vain. These means may be multiplied and diffused a thousandfold ; but unless they are enforced and ratified by a corresponding personal holiness, the victories of the gospel will still be circumscribed.

In fine, are our means and resources inadequate to evangelise the world ? In commanding His people to convert the world, has Christ required of them an impossibility ? Has He left them without sufficient means to achieve this sublime end ? No ; they are not straitened in Him. The work is the greatest and most diffi-

cult in the universe ; but under God, with proper efforts, they can do it.

Have we found the great primal cause of the slow progress of Christianity? Many causes, doubtless, both on the part of the friends and the foes of Christ, have hindered the spread of truth, for which both are responsible ; but we write it down as our most solemn conviction *that the great obstacle in the way of the diffusion of the gospel* is the low tone of practical religion among *the professed friends of Christ*. We say this advisedly and emphatically. We have lingered to shew what are not the principal impediments, that every reader may the more distinctly and realisingly ponder the main hindrance. The responsibility for the slow diffusion of Christianity lies at the door of those who profess to be the disciples of Christ. In their lives they have misrepresented the religion of the Bible ; and thereby repelled from it the world. This great fault on the part of the churches by no means exculpates mankind for their irreligion. Their blame is just as great as, if all who named the Saviour's name walked even as He walked. It is at the same time true that professors are responsible for the unfair and ruinous inference that "those who are without" draw from their inconsistencies. There are among the friends of the Redeemer many other causes that hold back

the overflowing glories of the gospel, for which they are accountable, and which they should at once put away ; but none, nor all others combined, so much retard the very kingdom of Christ, as the want of a higher standard of personal religion in the churches of God. This makes the world's redemption linger. Christian brother ! we desire that you should think on this position till it not only gains the assent of your mind, but the deep and practical persuasion of your heart.

We repeat the position—and it challenges prayerful reflection from all “who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity”—that the chief reason why so small a proportion of our fallen race has been reclaimed to Christ is not because our Saviour and His gospel are not perfect, not from the want of a purer version of the Scriptures ; nor so much from the want of a purer theology ; nor so much from lack of more and better preachers ; nor so much from the want of a more extensive circulation of the Scriptures, and other good books ; nor so much from the want of more colleges and theological schools. It is certain that a deficiency in these most important instrumentalities operates most extensively against the cause of Christ ; but the grand evil that lies back of and gives rise to most of the difficulties in the way of the world's redemp-

tion, and towers up itself, like mountains piled on mountains, is the want of a more thorough piety in the mass of church members. Let this be removed, and most of the other impediments will at once disappear.

CHAPTER II.**THE PREVALENT DEFECTS IN THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER—AND HOW THESE DEFECTS OPERATE AGAINST THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL.**

IN opening the New Testament, one of the first things that rivets the attention of the careful reader, is the beauty and perfection of the Christian character, as sketched by Christ and His apostles. Read the Sermon on the Mount; turn then to the sixth, eighth, and twelfth chapters of the Epistle to the Romans; ponder then the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians; then study the third chapters of the Epistles to the Ephesians and Philippians; with the addresses of our risen Lord to the seven churches of Asia; in fine, read all the Scriptures. Here you will find religion as it is, and as it should be. Upon the pages of God's book the Christian character shines forth in all its un-earthly beauty. Look at religion as it was displayed by the first Christians. True, they had some imperfections; but these imperfections were

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like spots in the sun. But, above all, witness religion as it was exemplified in the character of Jesus Christ. He was a pattern as well as the author of our religion. Now, the precepts of the Scriptures, and the example of the first Christians, and, above all, the example of Christ, constitutes the infallible standard and touchstone for all lands and ages. In reality, and in the estimation of Heaven and of earth, we are religious just in proportion as we conform to this standard. But who is not struck with the contrast between the religion of Christ, as it is revealed in the Scriptures, and as it appears in the lives of modern professors? Study religion as it is in the inspired standard, and as it appears in actual life, and you will be pained and astonished at the dissimilarity. Are they one and the same? How immensely and distressingly short do the mass of professing Christians come of the inspired model !

Now, the wide-spread and manifest difference between religion as it should be, and religion as it is ; between the religion that Christ displayed and the Scriptures reveal, and the religion now seen in the conduct of professors, is the far-reaching cause of the limited diffusion of vital Christianity.

But let us exhibit some of the particulars in which the religion of actual life, when compared

with the inspired standard, is defective—in other words, the prevalent defects in practical religion.

We say in general, that the common type of Christian character *is greatly wanting in personal holiness*. Our religion on record is a holy religion. It wages a war against all sin, great and small. It has no mantle to inwrap a small or fashionable sin under the guise of an infirmity. The Scriptures hold up sin's malignant features in the sunlight of eternal truth, and for our illustration of its fruits, point to a blasted earth and a burning hell.

Take a few of the precepts of our religion as it is in the oracles of God: "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." "Be ye holy, for I am holy." "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice, and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you." "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatso-

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ever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." And then witness how holiness was personified in its Author. He was the holy precepts of the law embodied. He was a bright model of all His people should aim at and shew. His manner of life corrects all in us that is wrong, whether of defect or excess. "He did no sin ; neither was guile found in his mouth." "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." He re-entered heaven with His moral character as pure as it was when He came into the world.

Now, how far short do the mass of professing Christians fall, of exemplifying these precepts, and of copying Christ, their great model ! How unscriptural and un-Christlike are hundreds who name the name of Christ ! What a marked difference, in point of purity, between the religion of the Bible and of Jesus, and the religion of most professors ! It cannot be denied that some bearing the Christian name are strangers to common morality. Their passions are unsubdued, their tongues are unbridled, their habits are loose ; in life, they are enemies to the cross of Christ. Their creed exerts no control over their tempers and conduct. It slumbers inertly in their minds, leaving them as proud, as self-

indulgent, as covetous and selfish as the great crowd who make no pretension to religion.

How lax are some in the observance of the Sabbath ! How engrossed others in the pursuit of gain ! How cunning and overreaching others in all their pecuniary transactions ! How unfeeling and uncharitable others toward the poor ! How passionate and cruel others in the management of their servants ! How freely and incautiously do others touch the wine-cup ! How revengeful and malicious others toward those who have wronged them ! How haughty others in their bearing toward inferiors ! How stinted and illiberal others in their contributions to spread the gospel ! How unfrequent others in their attendance at the house of God ! O shame, where is thy blush ? " They are the worse for mending, and are washed to a fouler stain." " Tell it not in Gath ; publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice ; lest the daughters of the Philistines triumph." Here is the cause of our failure. This unholiness in the ranks of Zion accounts for our want of success with both God and man. This vast amount of irreligion in the churches has grieved the Spirit, in whom is all our efficiency, and repelled and prejudiced mankind. This is the grand cause of the unbelief and infidelity around us. Men being, from their

depravity, disposed to reject the religion of Christ, at once, when they see such flagrant inconsistencies in professing Christians, draw the conclusion that the fountain from which such uncleanness flows cannot be pure—that whether there be anything real in Christianity or not—that they must be as safe for eternity as those whose profession so flatly contradicts their lives. So long as our churches have such unscriptural members, sinners, through all their tribes and gradations, will not only find no difficulty in rejecting the gospel, but will scornfully curl the lip, and, pointing to such professors, say, “And what do ye more than others?”

Now, this will never do. Throughout all our churches there must be a radical improvement in holiness, or the mighty restraints to the outpouring of the Spirit, and the stumbling-blocks in the way of the world's conversion will never be removed. Habitual sinning must be abandoned. We shall never impress the impenitent with the divinity and importance of our religion till throughout the rank and file of our membership the covetous become liberal, the proud humble, the cruel kind, the sensual temperate, the selfish benevolent, the revengeful forgiving, the prayerless devout, and the slothful active.

Another prevalent and hurtful defect in the Christian character of this day is *fickleness*. The

religion required of us in the Scriptures, and displayed by Christ, is a steady, uniform, life-long habit. The command is, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, *always abounding* in the work of the Lord." To fickle Reuben God said, "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel."

All good results in nature are effected by agencies that are ceaseless and uniform. Destruction is the work of influences that are capricious and sudden. A crop may in a moment be destroyed by a storm, but it cannot be raised unless the laws of vegetation operate regularly, and the sun shines on steadily from spring till autumn. What would be the effect on the natural world if the sun, moon, and stars should suddenly cease to shine in midsummer?

Not more hurtful would such capriciousness in the lights of the heavens be to the physical world than is unsteadiness in Christians, the moral lights to the moral world. Many of them are half-hearted, transient, and periodical in their religion. Chameleon-like, they take a hue from every new condition they are placed in. They change with the times, vary with circumstances, and always conform to the company they are in. With the worldly they are worldly, and with the pious they are saints. When this class are in revivals and under afflictions, they

are zealous, humble, prayerful, and heavenly-minded ; but when cold times, and health and prosperity return, they are as lukewarm and as worldly as if no revival vows had ever been made, or as if the hand of God had never been upon them. Like periodical streams that flow rapidly during the rains, and dry up in droughts, they are all life and zeal in propitious times, and then in stupid seasons they are as supine and inconsistent as if they had never known Christ. Like meteors that blaze on the world for a while and then become extinguished, leaving darkness more visible, Christians of this type are strikingly religious under some visitation from God, and anon the light of their example dies out. Like a comet glittering on the mantle of night, and then disappearing, they make a profession and run well for a while, and then commence dropping one religious trait after another, till they become undistinguishably blended with the great crowd that move on to perdition. In the language of an old writer, "They are by turns a pastor's comforters and tormentors. Both God and Satan seem equally to claim and disown them."

Now, such professors are practical corrupters and perverters of the truth, and are the means of doing it immense mischief. They betray the cause they espouse, harden the wicked in their irreligion, and prove stumbling-blocks to the

honest inquirer. Impulsiveness and irregularity of conduct weaken the strength of the Christian character, and impair the confidence of others in religion in this way. While Christians are firm, walking worthy of their calling, mankind look on and begin to think that they are in earnest, and that religion is true ; but anon they grow remiss, their zeal is cool, they begin the service of another master : the world sees it, distrust is awakened, and they are confirmed in their unbelief.

Now, for the sake of God's honour and the world's good, this defect should at once be corrected. Every lover of Christ and the souls of men should determine to be thoroughly and permanently religious. To convert those without, Christians must be like the streams flowing from perpetual fountains, which, though increased by the rains and diminished by the droughts, yet flow on continually, with sparkling beauty and increasing fertility ; or like the fixed stars, which, though sometimes obscured by the clouds, yet shine on from the dome of the moral heavens with unabated brilliancy on benighted man. Just let Christ's disciples be uniformly as well as really pious, and they will both illuminate and melt the world. They will then, in more senses than one, be the world's only hope.

Another defect in the religion of most profes-

sors is *that they make it secondary to the interests of time and sense.* The Scriptures, in the way of commands and examples, make the service of God man's chief business beneath the sun. "But seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you:" viz., make the concerns of my kingdom, and your interests in it, first in order of importance, and first in order of time. David speaks of godliness as his *only* concern. "*One thing* have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire into his temple." Says Paul, "This *one thing* I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark." Paul did many things, but they all had a oneness of design. So of all the New-Testament disciples. Their religion formed their theme, business, and character. Nay, more: religion was the great business of the Master himself. Said He to His parents, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" To obey the law, and work out human redemption, occupied all His thoughts, feelings, and toils, from His cradle to His cross. Thrones and kingdoms were nothing to Him. The religion of God was everything.

And from the very nature of the case, if the religion of Christ be anything, it must be everything ; if it be of any importance at all, it is of all importance. Man's chief end is not to buy, sell, and get gain, and then go and sleep an everlasting sleep in the grave ; but it is to live that he may do good, and find an admission into Paradise when he dies. Everything else pales into insignificance in comparison with this. This is the religion of the Bible, and it is as reasonable as it is scriptural.

But how many, in this day, make the religion of Christ their "all and in all?" It is our painful conviction that many modern professors reverse the divine order, and sink their religion into an affair of subordinate importance. The language of their lives is that they prefer many worldly objects to the favour and honour of Christ. What hundreds of Christ's avowed friends, in the tenor of their lives, make the interests of the soul and eternity give place to the body and time ! Practically the concerns of earth and of self have assumed the place of heaven and of God. Their profession and creed to the contrary, notwithstanding, that is first with them which should be last, and that last which should be first ; that is uppermost which should be undermost, and that undermost which should be uppermost. Are we doing the present race

of professors injustice? God forbid. Our appeal is to their lives. Are there not scores who, in action, make the interests of the church of which they are members, the spread of the gospel around them, the conversion of souls, and the promotion of revivals, secondary to their temporal concerns? Do they not habitually neglect the former, while they evince all zeal in the promotion of the latter? They say by their manner of living,—and some of them seem determined never to unsay it,—our farms, our merchandise, shall engross our every care; we will, as our chief business, buy and sell, and get gain; after pleasures, riches, and honours, we will go, though we revoke our baptismal vow, and open Christ's wounds afresh.

Such professors impede the march of Christianity more than all her outward foes. No infidel can injure the cause of Zion as much as that professor who shews a deeper concern in the affairs of the world than he does in the affairs of Christ's kingdom. Who, in all the ranks of Christ's enemies, does as much against the truth as the church member who reads the corrupt romance more than his Bible; takes a deeper interest in the gay assembly, where God is forgotten, than he does in the prayer-meeting; and who manifests more zeal in promoting a political party than he does the Church of Christ?

Hume's Essay on Miracles has been regarded as the most formidable and dangerous attack that has been made on Christianity ; yet it was so clearly answered by Campbell and others, that truth was greatly the gainer by the assault. The life, however, of a professor who is supremely engrossed in the things of time, is an argument against our religion that is, of all others, the most difficult to answer. The truth is, that pride, covetousness, sloth, and self-indulgence in such, is an argument against Christianity which, as far as it goes, cannot be answered. Over the Carlyles, the Strausses, the Humboldts, and the Parkers, we will soon triumph with increased power. We laugh all such enemies to scorn. But we do dread worldly professors. They strike us dumb. They are Satan's best allies in our own camp. Hence it is our solemn conviction, that unless they can be induced to tear the world from their heart, rend the veil from their eyes, and make the religion of Christ their pre-eminent business on earth, it will be better for all concerned that they should have their names stricken out of the church register, and lay off the sacred badge of their profession.

This glaring defect in our Christian characters must be corrected ; we must return to the first principles of the gospel, or disappointment and defeat will await all our efforts to convert the world.

We must become persons of one book. It is a disparagement of a man in the worldly aspects of his character to be a man of one idea. Far otherwise with the Christian. To be a person of one book, one idea, is his glory and power. Let us, then, in reality and in appearance, make the salvation of our own soul, and the souls of others, the great mission of life. Let Christians act on the principle that if either interests must be neglected, it shall be those of the body and of time ; not those of the soul and of eternity. Let them impress the world that they hold everything else subservient to getting good and doing good ; that they are determined, by all means, to reach heaven, and attend to the world by the way.

Then the sun blazing in mid-heaven will not be more evidential that there is a God of nature, than will be the example of such Christians that there is a God of grace.

A want of affectionateness is another defect in the mass of Christians. "God is love." Jesus Christ was an incarnation of love. Love to man, however dimmed and down-trodden, was the great passion that animated and impelled Him. "Love prompted all His deeds, shone in all His smiles, breathed in all His sighs, led Him to Gethsemane, and then to Calvary, and kept Him there till He offered Himself a spotless victim

for our sins." On the countenance of the dying Saviour there was one expression stronger than the dying agony itself: it was calm, meek, unconquered love; and when He came back from the sepulchre, love prompted Him to send the redemption He had just achieved, first to His murderers; love induced Him to commission His apostles to carry the tidings of that redemption to all the world; love controls all His movements in the wide range of His mediatorial government, and leads Him to seek through all, and in all, the salvation of the world. The same undying compassion for the unsaved, was, in a great measure, possessed and manifested by the apostles. What intense, world-wide compassion still lives in their sermons, prayers, and epistles! They moved the world because they wore as a frontlet on their brow the compassion of the cross. What is the religion of the New Testament? It is supreme love to God and man. Without it, "though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels, though we have the gift of prophecy, understand all mystery, and all knowledge; and though we have all faith, so that we could remove mountains; though we bestow all our goods to feed the poor, and give our bodies to be burned, and have not love, we are nothing."

This is the religion that Christ and His apostles taught and exemplified, and the religion that

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the Scriptures record and require of all who would make good their claim to the Christian's name. But how distressingly unlike Christ and the primitive saints, in this particular, are the professors of this day ! How far short do they come of exemplifying the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians ! How unbrotherly toward each other, and how selfish, cold, and repelling toward mankind around them ! What acrimony between those who have one common Saviour ! What uncharitableness in their mutual bearing toward each other in the ministry ! What feud, strife, and evil-speaking in the churches ! How unkind member toward member ; and then what virulence between the various sects ! The jealousy and animosity with which they mutually attack and repel each other, often, has scarcely a parallel with those who profess no fellowship with Christ. Whatever else the world may now say of the disciples of Christ, they cannot say, "Behold how these Christians love each other !"

Nor have the friends of Christ been less deficient in love toward the irreligious. For fear of subjecting themselves to the charge of fanaticism, they have repressed their warmth and solicitude for the impenitent, and made their religion assume the aspect of formality and coldness. They have fallen into the error that

earnestness and enthusiasm may be tolerated in everything else but in religion.

Now, piety of this cold, stereotyped grade is as powerless as it is unscriptural. The physical world might at once be flooded by all the light of the sun, moon, and stars, and yet, in the absence of that mysterious vital warmth which accompanies their rays at certain seasons, the earth would remain one vast scene of wintry desolation. So with the case in hand; not all the light streaming from the Scriptures, good books, and an eloquent ministry, will ever melt the wintry depravity of man without the glowing warmth of Christian love. In order to their being converted, mankind do not so much need information as they need persuasion; but nothing persuades so mightily as love. When compassion for souls has been inspired by the cross, kindled by the Spirit, fed by secret prayer, and then breathes from the lips, and beams from the eyes, it melts and wins man's heart when nothing else could move him.

The type of religion, then, that we need, must combine and display a due proportion of warmth as well as heat. All Christians who have made their mark on the world have had compassionate hearts and affectionate manners. Said a man once to one of Whitefield's friends, "How is it that your Whitefield has set the world all on

fire?" "Because he is on fire himself," was the truthful reply. Said a veteran military officer, "I have not wept but once for forty years, and that was when I heard Jesse Bushyhead, the Cherokee preacher, address his countrymen from the parable of the prodigal son, when his tears fell faster than he could wipe them away." It is not learning, logic, and rhetoric that form the key to the human soul, but love. It is just here hundreds of ministers are erring. On every Sabbath, thousands of sermons, though logically, rhetorically, and theologically correct, fall with pointless insipidity, because wanting in the mighty element of love. Many ministers who are commonplace and powerless, would be mighty under God in pulling down strongholds, if they spoke the truth in love. The great want in the ministry is not more learning, nor polish, nor acquirements, but a deeper and intenser love for souls, to vitalise their matter and manner. This is true eloquence. No one can preach without it. Nor in the ministry only must our religion put on the winning forms of love. To the Sabbath-school teacher, to the parent, to the husband, the wife—in sum, to Christians in all relations, love is indispensable in order to convert sinners from the error of their way. Mankind, upon whom we are to operate, are not only accurate judges of morality, but they

are shrewd physiognomists. They instinctively read the feelings of our heart in our countenances and intonations of voice, and they are repelled from us, and from our religion, by coldness in our manner as well as by impropriety in our conduct. Oh, for a religion, affectionate, like that which Jesus and His first disciples displayed! Then would Zion's self-inflicted wounds be healed, her beauty be restored, her strength be regained, and everywhere she would find access to all hearts for her Lord.

Another palpable defect in the present type of Christian character, *is the want of a calm, satisfied, cheerful spirit.* The religion of Christ is a joyful religion. The gospel is glad tidings of great joy. Christianity is the most blissful theme in the universe. It did not create sin, woe, and death. Its mission is to remove these evils, and fill earth with gladness, and heaven with shouts of transport. It banishes unhappiness by removing its cause; and then awakens in the soul a positive, pure, ever-augmenting happiness. Mopish and sad Christians there are; but in all the Scriptures we have never read of a melancholy religion. The religion enjoined in the Bible, and that shone so brightly in the example of the primitive Christians, is an anticipated heaven on earth.

"Happy is that people whose God is the

Lord." "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice." In whatever state the early saints were, they were content. In everything they gave thanks. If sorrowful, they were always rejoicing. They were cheerful in the house of their pilgrimage. They charmed the ear of a godless world by their songs of joy, as they walked on to the grave.

But how have modern Christians deteriorated in this respect! Wherefore? Has Christianity changed? Its grounds of joy are the same, Jesus Christ is the same, the promises are the same, the grace of God is the same, and the hope of heaven is the same. The reason of this great falling off in Christian happiness is a misapprehension of the genius of our gospel, and inconsistency of life.

Some professors have long and demure faces, and are always sighing and groaning as if they were at a funeral. Others practically declare that their religion is not satisfactory, by going to the world for pleasures. They seem less calm and cheerful in the service of Him whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light, than they did while in bondage to sin and Satan. Here and there are to be found a few who are serenely happy in the service of Christ; but the great majority appear to be no happier than others.

Now, such Christians greatly misrepresent

their religion, and hinder the world's conversion. They confirm the prevalent and fatal prejudice, that the religion of Christ is unfavourable to present happiness. They render the religion of their Master unlovely and repulsive in the estimation of the irreligious. The world is repelled by a piety apparently so comfortless and unquiet. There is an immense loss to the cause of Christ, from the fact that so many Christians do not make it clear to them that are about them that they find in the service of God a solid, satisfying good. It is our conviction that the gloom and sourness that have characterised some professing Christians, have been the occasion of thousands rejecting the gospel, and going away to an undone eternity. It may be well questioned whether sullenness and sadness in the disciples of Christ have not done as much harm to the cause of truth as immorality of conduct.

It is high time, then, that such mistaken views of heaven-born Christianity should be corrected. We owe it to deathless souls around us to be satisfied and cheerful Christians. Happiness is the world's great pursuit, and when they shall see Christians evincing that they have found it; see them serene and collected amid the waves of trouble; behold them kept tranquil amid earth's tumults, and reflecting in their daily walk a peace that the world cannot give, then religion will be-

come to them attractive and resistless. Did the mass of professing Christians live thus, Christianity would at once be invested with a beauty, dignity, and impressiveness which are now unknown.

Christian brother, repent of thy past sadness, and the harm you have thereby done, and cheer up. Has not thy God done enough and promised enough to shame thee out of thy gloomy fears, and induce thee to take down thy harp and commence the transporting song? Jesus Christ atoned for thy sins, and through Him thou hast a hope of forgiveness. Is there anything in this repressing and dispiriting to thee? For thee, death has been abolished, hell conquered, and heaven purchased. For thy good, God has pledged that all things shall work together. For thy weal, He marshals the three great kingdoms of nature, providence and grace. In all this is there anything to render thee melancholy? No, Christian brother! by thy unhappiness thou art wronging thy Saviour, thy religion, thyself, and the world. Only just come up to thy duty and high privilege, and make full proof of the blissful power of the gospel, and thou wilt do more to spread our Lord's empire than all our books and sermons can do.

Another marked defect in the majority of Christians of this age *is their want of humility.*

How fully and urgently do the Scriptures inculcate this virtue as an essential part of the religion of Christ ! “ God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” “ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”

And then how strikingly was this grace displayed in our Model and Redeemer ! Though no other being ever had the same reasons to entertain high opinions of himself, yet no one was ever equally humble. He voluntary chose the humblest life, the humblest associates, the humblest food, the humblest dress, the humblest manners, and died the most humiliating death. Of Himself He said, “ I am meek and lowly in heart.”

Now, in a good measure these precepts must be exemplified, and this trait in Christ's character imitated by all who would wear Christ's name. Some things are appendages of religion : others enter into and form its core and essence. Such is humility. It is as indispensable to scriptural piety as gold is to a guinea, or roundness is to a ball. Indeed, it is to the other graces what the grass that carpets the field is to the flowers that here and there gem that field. Hence the admonition, “ Be ye clothed (or robed) with humility.” As Demosthenes said of action in oratory, so may we say of this grace,—It is the first, second, and third thing in religion.

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But is this feature of Christ's religion developed in the life and conduct of Christians? No: see how some on account of their genealogy, others on account of their wealth, others on account of their acquirements, others on account of their high social position, and others on account of their distinction in the church of Christ, are puffed up with pride. How ambitious and haughty are many claiming to be the ministers of Christ! How this sin has impaired the unity, marred the beauty, and weakened the Zion of God! Will the world adopt Christianity with this type of it before them? They know that such Christians contradict their profession and misrepresent their Master. In the estimation of sinner as well as of saint, the most incongruous of all things is a proud Christian.

Here there must be a reformation. The proud must be humbled. The meek and lowly disposition that was in Christ, and characterised all His early saints, must also be in and be exhibited by the disciples of Christ now, or they will never effectually carry out their high mission.

Another prominent delinquency in the Christian character, in its ordinary development, is *uncaring self-indulgence*. The religion of Christ is a self-denying, cross-bearing religion. Hear the precepts of Christ: "If any man will come

after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." "And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." And this feature of His religion Jesus Christ most strikingly exemplified. He preached self-denial, and He sacrificed heaven and Himself for the world. He requires His disciples to be detached from the world; and He "had not where to lay His head." In a word, He preached the cross, and He bore it; and how closely the first Christians trod in the self-denying steps of their Master! Property, reputation, personal ease, and friends they joyfully surrendered for Christ. They counted all things but loss for Him and His salvation. They gave themselves *to* Him who gave Himself *for* them.

Now, there are thousands of modern professors who cannot help knowing that in this essential particular, their manner of living is utterly unlike that of Christ and His primitive followers. The mass of professors live for self-indulgence and self-advancement. They seem determined not to incumber themselves with more religion than will allow them to take the world along with them to heaven.

The religion that many have costs them nothing. This type of piety is as easy as it is

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fashionable. "It consists in belonging to some fashionable denomination, and in shewing a zeal for its peculiarities, in taking a part in the leading controversies of the day, in buying popular religious books as fast as they come out, subscribing to religious societies, attending church on Sabbath, and in discussing the merits of preachers. All this is easy. Such attainments do not now make one singular. They require no sacrifice. They entail no cross." Their religion is exceedingly convenient. They forego no comforts for Christ. They have no anxieties of soul for the good of Zion. They give only what they can conveniently spare. The amount of their contributions to the various claims of the gospel is less than they expend for some useless luxury. They have no realising sense that they and all they have belong to Christ. Their cares extend not beyond their own interests. Themselves and their families form the centre of all their affections and aims. True, they lead regular lives, but they make no more self-denials than if they were infidels. They are prodigal in expenditures on the gratification of their personal, domestic, and social tastes, but have nothing to give to spread the gospel and honour Christ.

And are such indeed the disciples of the self-denying Redeemer? If the very core of religion consists in subjecting self-interests to the glory

of God, in living unto Christ, and not unto ourselves, then is it not as improper to call self-seekers Christians, as self-murderers? In all God's book has any one ever read of a covetous, self-indulgent Christian? Have not the churches been incumbered and weakened long enough with professors, who dream they can go to heaven without paying tribute to our divine King? From such professors the cause of Christ gains nothing, and loses much. They misrepresent the Saviour, mislead their children, discourage their brethren, and harden into hopeless impenitence mankind around them. Alas, this is not the day for self-denying, devoted Christians! It is a day of too much prosperity. Oh, for another great reformation!

Another defect in the common type of religion is *inactivity*. God never intended any servant of His, in any kingdom or rank, to be idle. Jesus Christ, our great model, did not sit down in Jerusalem and require those who needed His salvation to seek Him out and wait His convenience; but with a holy industry He went about doing good. Here, teaching the ignorant; yonder, soothing the sorrowing, pardoning the guilty, and saving the lost. To-day, preaching the Sermon on the Mount, to-morrow, meeting by the wayside, and giving sight to a blind Bartimeus; the next day restoring mind to a poor maniac,

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and sending him home to bless his family ; now, raising the dead, casting out devils and healing the diseased ; anon, mingling His tears with the afflicted. With a zeal as steady as time, with a perseverance that no opposition could turn aside, and with a singleness of purpose that neither men nor devils could frustrate or discourage, He continued to preach, pray, and travel, to reclaim the depraved, to deliver the oppressed, elevate the down-trodden, and comfort the distressed, till He finished His work on the cross. And how closely did the first disciples follow the example of their Master in this respect ! In that day there were no lounging idlers in the vineyard. Not the apostles only, but private Christians of both sexes, exerted their powers, mortal and immortal, in carrying out the commission of their ascended Lord. Though in the way of executing their Master's work, power lifted up her arm, authority promulgated her edicts, bigotry mustered her hosts, intolerance pointed her enmity, and persecution opened her dungeons, forged her fetters, reared her gibbets, and kindled her martyr fires ; these high-souled heroes of the cross addressed themselves to the work of Christ, and bore the burden and heat of the day till life's sun went down, and the morning of a brighter world dawned on them. They attempted to do, and did for Christ what Alex-

ander, Cæsar, and Bonaparte attempted to do in war,—viz., conquer the world. How rightly is one book in the Bible called, not the creed, not the joys, but the “*Acts of the Apostles!*” “*Acts*” so united, self-denying, daring, and persevering, that in a few years they filled the whole Roman empire with the sound of salvation. *Action! action!* for Him that died for us and rose again, was their life-long motto. They were Christians *indeed*. Heaven and earth acknowledged them such. Had the same mind to work been in all subsequent Christians, long before this, the millennium would have dawned on this dark world.

But, alas! most of the Christians that have lived since have been engaged about almost everything else, rather than fulfilling the unrevoked command of their Lord, to exert themselves in conveying the gospel to every creature. It has been nearly eighteen centuries since the first Christians fell asleep, and with here and there some exceptions, there has not been, until of late, anything like systematic, combined *effort* to convert the world to Christ; and even now in this age, peculiarly marked by activity in every department of enterprise, the great majority of Christians in all denominations are absorbed in other business than that which brought the Son of God into our world, and

which He has, by express command, committed to His disciples of all generations. It is only the few that have a mind to work. Perhaps nine-tenths of the avowed friends of the Redeemer have committed the hurtful mistake of making their religion consist in sound creeds and joyful frames. Their inquiry has been, Lord, what wilt Thou have us know, hear, read, enjoy, believe, and talk of? not, What wilt Thou have us *do*? Now, this deficiency greatly lessens the power of the Christian character.

For personal exertions in the cause of Christ there can be no compensation. To be a New Testament Christian it is not enough to possess and display the passive virtues, such as meekness, gentleness, patience, and affectionateness. Every Christian is bound, in addition to being sound in the faith and consistent in life, *to do all* he can, by his hand, his mind, his voice, and estate, to spread the empire of his Redeemer. What is a full definition of Bible religion? It does not, according to one apostle, consist in works without faith; nor, according to another apostle, does it consist in faith without works; but it does, according to all the apostles and the Lord of apostles, consist in the faith that justifies the soul before God, followed by the works that justify faith before men.

There is perhaps with the professing world

enough religion in principle to convert the world speedily, if it were only developed in personal, vigorous, self-denying effort to grow in grace and impart grace. The unbelief of the world will never be overcome until the doctrines of our religion assert themselves in deeds of goodness. The awful verities that men are depraved and exposed to an endless hell,—that Christ died to save them,—that they must repent and believe before they die, or spend their eternity in penal flames, must be exhibited not only in our creeds, sermons, and books, but in ceaseless personal efforts to avert from ourselves and others the doom that awaits the irreligious.

There are Christians enough in the world to place Christianity in the ascendant, if they all would only go out of themselves in efforts to enthrone Christ in the hearts of others. If all were as laborious for Christ as a few have been, in less than a century the entire race would be brought to the knowledge of Christ. If all the visible hosts of Zion would, after the pattern and standard of primitive times, leave the shady recesses of sloth and go abroad in the habitations of men and exert themselves for God and souls, the millennium would at once commence dawning. If some man would rise up and bring about a second great reformation, by which all the friends of Christ could be induced to *do what*

they can for Christ, he would accomplish a work that would accomplish more for God's glory and the world's good, than the Reformation of the sixteenth century ; and yet this must be done, or the vast masses will never be turned from the dark way of perdition. Our religion must become incarnated, and take the form of action, or the world will never be impressed deeply with its divinity and importance.

Another defect in most Christians, *is their want of symmetry ; or, their one-sidedness*. Christianity, as it shines upon the pages of the Bible, is a perfect system. And how harmoniously perfect was religion in the life and character of Christ ! When you contemplate the character of the blessed Redeemer, you see no one excellency standing out in undue prominence. His character is the loveliness of one perfect whole. All beauty, all worth, all excellences, are so blended and intershaded with the rest, that the more we study His character, the more are we impressed with its unity.

But in the present generation of His disciples, we see in but few any approximation to this feature of His character. In the great majority you will see some one or more of the Christian's traits, and be at the same time struck with the palpable absence of others. In some respects they seem to be very religious ; but in other

respects they are very irreligious. Grace seems to have been at work on some parts of their nature, but on other parts of it there is seen no signs of its operation. They are better persons as regards some things; but with regard to others, there is no improvement. In some of their connexions they serve God and reflect His truth; but in other relations equally important, they serve another master, and reflect his dark image.

Here is a disciple who seems to be devotional, converses well on the subject of religion, and prays well; but to all around him he is manifestly avaricious. He is so eager to get rich that he will grind the face of the poor. Of him the world scornfully say, He may be a Christian, but he is a very grasping one. Here is a second: he is liberal; he willingly and cheerfully honours the Lord with his substance, but he does his business loosely; often fails to fulfil his word. Of him, the keen-eyed world sarcastically say, He may have piety, but he is not honest. He may render unto God the things that are God's, but he does not render unto man the things that are man's. Here is a third, who is a model of integrity, diligence, and uprightness; but there is one serious blot on his escutcheon: he is proud, obstinate, and self-willed. Of him, his neighbours say, He may be a Christian, but he

is a very ill-natured, crabbed, churlish one. Here is another, who is humble, meek, and unassuming; but in his Christian character there is one glaring inconsistency, on which, like the falling star, the green-eyed world fix their attention, and make the occasion of stumbling; both in worldly and religious matters he is exceedingly indolent. Here is another, who, in all his relations, is active and persevering, but there is one hurtful drawback; he has an unamiable temper, and an ungovernable tongue. He a Christian? say some; why he is a tyrant in his household! Here is another, who is amiable and gentle, but there is one dereliction that greatly lessens his influence: he is inclined to be light and trifling in his conversation. His deficiency in gravity renders him powerless for good.

Before leaving the prevalent deficiencies in the Christian character, it may be well to point out the causes of this disproportionateness in the development of our faith. Many of these defects are produced by the partial and distorted exhibitions of the Christian system that are given in the creeds, sermons, and books of the different sects. Few, if any, in this day, teach and urge a whole gospel. None inculcate the doctrines and duties of our religion in the same relative position and importance that they oc-

cupy in the New Testament. Each age, denomination, and preacher, has a favourite theme. Vitally important as the great doctrine of justification by faith alone in the merits of Christ is, it may be well questioned, whether the whole Protestant ministry, in opposing the Popish error of salvation by works, have not depreciated works from the prominence they have in the Scriptures. Which of our standard books on theology exhibit works as fully, as the evidence and development of faith, as they are set forth in the teachings of Christ and His apostles? The effect of such teaching has been that some have been made Antinomians in theory, and thousands in practice. Not that the Reformers of the sixteenth century made too much of justification before God, without the works of the law, but they said too little of justification before men, by works. Paul's method of justification has been all and in all, while that of the Apostle James has been ignored; and hence the bad practical effect on the lives of Protestant Christians. Trinitarians, in their opposition to the Unitarian heresy, have, in effect, dissevered Christ, the atoning Priest, from Christ the exemplar. The New Testament develops Christ's religion as consisting of faith in His atoning death, and imitation of His perfect character. But how deplorably is the latter feature of Christ

overlooked by the evangelical pulpit and press ! Hundreds of books have been written on Christ, as an atoning sacrifice ; in all our long list of good books, is there one formally on Christ the model ? Sabbath after Sabbath our pulpits resound with sermons on the cross ; and this is infinitely important. Woe to the world when a vicarious Calvary ceases to be the central truth of all our preaching and writing. But how comparatively seldom is Christ preached as a Pattern ? Now, the counterpart effect of all this has been to make Christians more like Christ in their sentiments and feelings, than in their life and conduct. Some confine their ministry to the comforting aspects of the gospel, and the tendency of their preaching has been to make their people mere insulated pietists ; mere religious epicures, whose only concern is to enjoy themselves, and get to heaven when they die. Others dwell almost exclusively on the doctrines of the gospel, aiming to lay well the foundation of the sinner's peace with God ; and the tendency of their ministry is most excellent, as far as it goes ; but the effect is only to Christianise the hearer in one of his great relations. Such do not preach a broad, full gospel ; and hence the corresponding incompleteness in the religion of those they train. Others, again, regard the gospel as a system of practical benevolence ; nothing, in

their estimation, is religion that does not take the form of alms-deeds, and efforts to elevate the poor and down-trodden. Others, again, have their hearts set on the conversion of the heathen. This enterprise so engrosses their thoughts, so fills the field of their vision, that they regard nothing as genuine, practical religion, but exertions for the diffusion of the gospel ; and others, again, regard the gospel as a sort of socialising, civilising device, and according to their views, the highest type of Christianity is to battle with, and sweep away social and political evils ; though, in so doing, they sweep away their nation's constitution, and tear up the very foundation of society.

Now, all such views of Christ's religion tend greatly to misrepresent and injure it ; and they tend to make one-sided, defective Christians.

CHAPTER III.

SOME OF THE PARTICULARS IN WHICH THE RELIGION OF CHRIST MUST BE EXHIBITED IN ORDER TO EVINCE ITS DIVINITY, AND INDUCE MANKIND TO EMBRACE IT.

NOTHING is more important to the lost world in which we live, than that the friends of Christ should be in reality and in appearance entirely religious. To be the salt of the earth and the lights of the world, we must be religious in all the aspects of our characters. The whole man must be so completely transformed that every beholder, from the many standpoints around us, may see in us the image of Christ. The piety that genuine faith tends to produce, and which the world more than anything else needs, like a thread of gold, must be worked into the entire web of life. It must nowhere be gathered into unseemly blotches, but be suffused over the whole character, shedding over the entire man the hues and bloom of spiritual life. The whole lovely group of the graces of the Spirit must be displayed in

due relation and prominence. No one can be spared without impairing the Christian's beauty and lessening his moral power. In the healthy child there is an expansion of all the parts of the body. The arms do not grow while the legs remain stationary. So it is with the scriptural, influential Christian. No duty is neglected, no virtue is cultivated to the omission of other virtues. There is respect to all God's commandments, and every false way is hated.

The type of religion that is now needed does not consist in the belief of a few doctrines and in the performance of a few duties, but in believing the whole gospel, and in the avoidance of all that it forbids, and in doing all that it enjoins. The principles of grace must pervade, subordinate, and vitalise all our thoughts, feelings, words, and deeds. In fine, in all our relations, conditions, connexions, and circumstances, we must act Christianly. Whether on Sabbath or week day—when we are busiest and when we are idlest—whether in society or in solitude—whether we are glad or sad—whether we toil or rest, we must act out the religion of Christ.

Let us, then, specify some of the relations in which our religion must be developed in order to convince and draw men to Christ.

For the glory of Christ, the good of His people, and the conversion of the world, the church has

been organised. *Now, first in order of time our religious principle must appear in a public identification with the redeemed of the Lord.* If Christ has a standard on earth, reason demands that all who are His friends should rally around that standard. The idea of being a concealed friend of Christ is rebuked by all God's works and the plain teaching of the Scriptures. The divine plan is, that we first, by repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ, become inwardly and essentially religious, and then appear so by becoming a member of the Church and receiving the Lord's Supper. What is religion? It is to believe in Jesus Christ with all the heart, and then confess Him in His own appointed way.

Our religion is furthermore to appear in the church by a punctual, prayerful attendance on the ministry of the Word, in meeting with the saints for prayer, praise, consultation, and discipline ; in giving of our substance to spread the gospel at home and abroad—for giving is as much an element of Christ's religion as praying ; in loving, admonishing, guarding, sympathising with, and provoking unto good works all the family of Christ around us ; in contending for and maintaining the faith once delivered to the saints ; in striving for the harmony, peace, purity, and increase of the brotherhood ; in efforts to

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diffuse the gospel in one's own community and through all the world ; in praying for and teaching the rising generation ; and in efforts to convert those who are without.

Now, all this is the gospel in practice in one of our great and most important relations. These church duties and privileges, as far as they go, are the triumphs of the Christian principle in the human life. They are one great phase of the religion that honours Christ and saves the world. A church composed of such members is Christianity, in one of its great designs, in operation. Thus far such a people are witnesses for Christ, impersonations of the truth, and the light of the world.

But membership in the church alters none of the real relations of life. By going into the kingdom of Christ, we do not go out of the world. Our natural relations remain the same ; and it is just as important that we should act Christianly in these relations as it is that we should be Christ-like in the church. Many regard their religion as a sort of a sacred church affair—a robe too fine to be worn in the ordinary transactions of life. They lay it away for Sabbaths, revivals, and ceremonial occasions. When these are over, they merge the Christian into the man of the world. This is a most hurtful and wide-spread mistake. It leaves three-fourths

of the character unreclaimed to Christ. It blots and rends the robe of our profession. He who acts out his religious principles only as a member of the church, not only inflicts a deep injury on that church, but renders himself powerless with the unbelievers around him. It is comparatively easy to be religious in our church relations—it is outside of Zion that we have to fight the hardest and most important battles for Christ. To be religious in our everyday life and business—to be spiritually-minded and consistent amid the distractions of a family—to be holy amid the perplexing cares of a farm—to be God-fearing amid the fashions, laws, and false customs of those with whom we must mingle—to exhibit the light of a religious example amid the persecutions to which those who are godly will be subjected—to abide with God in our calling—to be governed by and display the Christian principle in all the jostlings and collisions of our pecuniary interests—to be a New-Testament Christian in the shop, the manufactory, the school-room, and in society, is the great difficulty in our Christian calling; and yet the regulating, sanctifying principles of the gospel must go with and control us in all these secular vocations and duties, or better for us and the cause of Christ, that we had never professed religion.

For the world's good, God has ordained the

family relation. It is the oldest and most useful of all societies. In this relation our faith in Christ must develop itself. Of all other connexions it is most important that we exhibit religion in this. But faith has not produced its legitimate effect in this far-reaching relation. There is a great deficiency in family religion. The domestic aspect of many a professing character, is unchristianised. Abroad, before the world, on great occasions, there are many whose religious example shines brightly, but at home it flickers into extinction. Many parents, who are valuable members of the church, are positively irreligious in the family sphere ; by yielding to little temptations, they destroy their religious influence over those whom God requires them to train for usefulness and heaven. Like the elephant whose skin can resist the force of the musket-ball, but is goaded to madness by the sting of the mosquito, there are many who manifest their religion by resisting great temptations, and bearing great afflictions, and yet allow themselves to be provoked by the ordinary petty trials and difficulties of their family affairs, into habitual irreligion of temper and conduct. They uncomplainingly bury their dead, and willingly do much for the cause of Christ abroad, and yet permit the little inequalities of children and servants to keep them so crabbed

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unkind, and irritable, that they neutralise all the good they would otherwise do. This is acting in religion, as the farmer would act who, in attempting to prevent inundations, should dike the high points, and leave the ravines unguarded. In vain may such parents teach and pray for the conversion of their household. Children are far more likely to practise what their parents do, than what they say. They are more influenced by the eye than by the ear. It would be infinitely better for the youth of some families if they saw more religion and heard less. We strongly advocate preceptive religion in parents ; but this without the ratification of example, is worse than powerless. Without the invincible grace of God the children who are only plied with precept, will become hardened in irreligion, die in their sins, and in eternity upbraid their parents for their ruin.

There are thousands of cogent motives that urge the exemplification of Christ's religion in the family circle. Nowhere else will piety tell so extensively. The friends of Christ move in no other sphere where there are so many probabilities that their religious example will be imitated, multiplied, and perpetuated. Seeing religion displayed by those who are so near to them, by those whose influence over them is so boundless, witnessing religion exemplified when

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their natures are so tender, plastic, and imitative, there is a moral certainty that such children will receive religious impressions, deep and ineffaceable. Just as pride, covetousness, ambition, intemperance, and profanity, in parents, poison human nature in its fountain, corrupt the stream of life, and send forward a tide of resistless evil to perdition's stormy lake ; so, on the other hand, religious precept and example, emanating from the same source, will mingle with and transform the elements of youthful nature before they flow into the stream of fixed habits, and thus put in motion a train of religious influences that will be diffused through all time, survive the resurrection trumpet, and augment, through eternity, the number and bliss of the redeemed. Parents, more than any other beings, save God, have the moulding of the materials that are to make the nation and compose the church. To the greatest earthly extent, they have in their hands the destinies of their offspring for both worlds. Their casual words and acts will live on for ever in their effects.

Parents, ponder your every step. You live at the fountains of influence. Your every movement touch chords that vibrate through eternity. With a Christian's name, be irreligious, and the writer would not take your place at the bar of God for ten thousand worlds. The ranks of

darkness will regard you as one of their successful allies. They will exult over your work of destruction. You will, in an increasing ratio, make the life of many miserable, and their perdition doubly sure. But in God's strength be consistently and strikingly religious in your households, and you will make a mark that will last long after the globe shall have been melted down by the last conflagration. You will deposit in the virgin soil of your children's souls the good seed of the kingdom, which, after you are in heaven, if not before, will produce the fruit of conversion to God, and usefulness to man. Exemplify before the children that God has given you the religion you profess, and your influence will be felt in the prosperity, perpetuity, and glory of your great republic, and in furnishing the church of Christ with well-trained members. In fine, the welfare of our country, and of the church, the glory of God, the salvation of our children, and, through them, of the world, all combine with the weight of a thousand worlds, to urge every parent to let the light of practical godliness shine on steadily in the family circle. If parents would have their children grow up in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord," and convert their households into nurseries for the church and for heaven, then it is not enough for them to talk and profess religion,

but they must constantly be and appear religious in their manner of living. What parents are and seem to be, will daguerreotype itself deeply in their children.

" Alas for a thousand fathers whose indulgent sloth
Hath emptied the vial of confusion o'er a thousand homes ;
Alas for the palaces and hovels that might have been nurseries of heaven,
But which worldliness has blighted into schools of hell.
A kindness most unkind, that hath always spared the rod ;
A weak and humbling indecision in the mind that should be master ;
A foolish love, pregnant of hate, that never frown'd on sin ;
A moral cowardice of heart that never dares command.
A house where the master ruleth is strong in united subjection,
And the only commandment with promise, being honour'd,
is a blessing to that house.
But if he yieldeth up the reins, it is weak in discordant anarchy,
And the bonds of love and union melt away as ropes of sand."

We sustain social as well as family relations. From instinct, and for pleasure and profit, we meet and mingle with each other. *Hence, our religion will be incomplete and uninfluential unless it is developed in the social circle.* Social piety is growing obsolete. From this most important sphere, practical religion is fast being excluded. The public opinion of this refined age is just as effectually banishing practical godliness from the ordinary intercourse of society, as the profession of it was banished from Rome

by the edicts of Claudius. Over the social department of life the world exercises an exclusive, stern, and despotic sway. It will allow you to profess religion, and be as devout as you choose in your religious observances ; but the moment you enter the social pale, it requires you to abjure your religious profession and adopt its modes, obey its maxims, speak its language, cultivate its temper, and be the friend of its friends and the enemy of its enemies. Should you dissent, it will proscribe and excommunicate you from the social circle, under the charge of enthusiasm ; and if nothing more, it will smite you with its tongue ; and just in this way the world is now, as it ever has been, a foe to Christianity, before which many a professor quails and crouches into a silent and sinful timidity, and thereby commits the sin of being ashamed of Christ before men. It requires more courage to rise up to the precious singularity of confessing Christ in this relation of life, than it does to go to a martyr's stake.

Here, then, is a growing and mighty evil, and unless bold-hearted Christians make a stand against it, our Zion will go into captivity, and the world will be undone. If we compound to lay off the sacred badge of our religion when we enter the social sphere, we at once surrender to the prince of darkness one of our Lord's out-

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posts, and commit the sin of treason against His kingdom. We must take, and maintain the social territory for Christ. Woe to the church and the world, too, if we retreat from it! Unless this great department of life be seasoned with the salt of practical religion, its moral corruption will go on increasing until Christianity will be compelled to abandon ground she has already gained.

Regardless, then, of the reproaches that may be incurred, unappalled by the charges of cant and sanctimoniousness that may be alleged against us, let us bind the scandal of the cross around our brow, and exhibit before the world its unutterable glories. Have not the friends of Christ the same right to exhibit their religion in social society, that the world have to exhibit their irreligion? Who is the more wanting in true politeness and refinement, the man who, in common intercourse, makes no secret of being a disciple of Christ, or the man who makes no secret of being an infidel? Some tell us, that when before the men of the world, our religion should be retiring and unseen. But the whole Bible inculcates openness and publicity in our attachment to Christ. True, Christ rebuked ostentation and hypocrisy, but He enjoins the manifestation of love to Him before all men, under all circumstances, under pain of His dis-

pleasure. As well say there are times when the sun, moon, and stars should conceal their beams in order not to be ostentatious. They were created to shine, and shine always. So the light of Christian example should be poured forth always on the darkness of a lost world. Is it immodest in the stars to shine, in the flowers to bloom, and the violet to emit its fragrance? No more is it immodest in the obscurest saint to display before men the light of true piety. Paul, John, Luther, Hall, Payson, and Chalmers were modest men, and gentlemen also; yet their religion formed their character; was as manifest in them as the sun blazing on the forehead of morning. And, then, what means Christ in saying, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven?" "He that is ashamed of me, and of my words, before men, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he shall come in his own glory, and with the glory of the Father, and with the holy angels." Our faith must shew itself in this side of our life and character, or we shall deny Christ, and confirm the world in their unbelief.

But is it asked, How are we to display the religion of Christ in this respect? We reply, In nameless little things. By speaking evil of no one, by putting away all jesting and foolish talk-

ing, by never ascribing to others a bad motive so long as you can impute to them good ones, by discouraging the tattler and tale-bearer, by seeking to heal breaches between neighbours, by discountenancing all unnecessary and dissipating amusements, by meekness, gentleness, kindness, sincerity, simplicity, affectionateness, pureness, and cheerfulness, by giving conversation a religious turn, by speaking of Christ, His kingdom and claims, on all suitable occasions. In this way you will shine as lights in the world—be invested with the mild glories of a heavenly deportment—display the winning sweetness of a holy example, and thereby impress the beholder not only that your religion is an emanation from heaven, but that it is transforming, ennobling, and above all things desirable.

But man sustains business as well as social relations. *Hence our religion must appear also in our secular transactions.* Man was made for society and business, as well as for loving God and praying to Him in secret. True, the most of our religion has to do with God and Christ and ourselves; but much of it regards our fellow-creatures, and cannot be exemplified without intermixture and transactions with them. One prevalent error is regarding religion as something separate from the common affairs of life. Many act on the unscriptural and mischievous

maxim of "keeping business in its place, and religion in its." Their creed is, that praying, holy thinking, reading, and conversation, hearing sermons, communion with God, and efforts to do good, are for Sabbaths; but on week-days, in the secular transactions of life, these things may be laid aside and ignored. Now, never was there a greater moral heresy!

As in the material world there are no conflicting laws, so in the moral world there are no conflicting duties. All duties are commanded by God, and are in a most important sense religious. God as much commands us to work and take care of our temporal interests on week-days, as He does that we should meet for His worship on Sabbath. He as much enjoins industry, prudence, and economy, as He does praying, repentance, and faith. He might have arranged matters otherwise. He might have built us houses as He creates the trees, and caused our corn and wheat to grow as He does the cockle and tares. He might have rained down our food as He did the manna of old, clothed us as He does the fowls, and educated our children without pains and expense on our part. But as this is not His arrangement; as He has ordained that in order to be fed, clothed, and educated, we must labour; and inasmuch as He requires of us in all things to glorify Him, to "be fervent

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in spirit" as well as "diligent in business," then it follows that it is His ordinance that His religion and the business of life should be blended; and if so, it moreover follows that there is no incompatibility between the religion of Christ and the avocations of life, for God never requires of His people impossibilities. "As the planets accomplish a twofold and simultaneous revolution—one on their axes and one in their orbits—and all is done in perfect harmony; so the Christian, by having a calling, and abiding with God in that calling, may beautifully and simultaneously revolve around the great centre of God's glory, and the centre of his worldly interests."* In this way the religion of the Bible may be brought down from that ethereal, angelic region in which it seems to the men of the world to dwell, and assume in the buying, selling, trading, bartering affairs of life a tangible, convincing, winning reality.

But, alas, how irreligious are thousands who wear the name of Christ, in the business aspects of their characters! What selfishness in the management of their pecuniary interests! What violations of the golden rule! Some make promises to meet their dues only to break them. Some take the advantage of the necessities of their neighbours to increase their gains. Others

* Caird.

evinced a disposition to take advantage in their bargains and sales. Others fail in business, when there are grounds to suspect that falsehood and fraud have attended the whole transaction. Others borrow money never to return it; and others, in their efforts after gain, shew a degree of overreaching bordering on dishonesty.

Now, who needs be told that in this way Christ has been deeply wounded in the house of His friends, and His cause greatly impeded? It is with Christians secularly that the men of the world have most to do; and many such men, judging Christianity by the inconsistent conduct of its friends in this particular, have been confirmed in their prejudices and opposition to it. Perhaps the pecuniary and commercial inconsistency of professing Christians is doing more to retard the spread of the gospel than any other. Here is Zion's chief danger. And verily this will never do. Our secular transactions must be Christianised, or the church will never carry out her mission. Until the friends of the Redeemer put away all wrong-doing in their business, until they feel themselves as much bound to obey the command, "Owe no man anything," as they do to keep the Sabbath and pray in secret, there will still remain one mighty stumbling-block in the way of the world's conversion. It is our deepest conviction, that unless professing Chris-

tians can be induced to regulate, subordinate, and control their secular interests more by gospel principles, they can never extensively and effectually spread the empire of their Lord. This blot on our escutcheon is one of the causes of our comparative defeat. Let the redeemed, for the sake of Christ's honour and the world's salvation, wipe it off. Let each one in God's strength determine that the Christian shall appear in the man of business. Evince your religion by not only keeping within the precincts of legal obligation, but by avoiding every petty unfairness, and by exemplifying whatsoever things are honest and honourable. We earnestly plead for a reformation in this direction. Let the pure religion of the cross be acted out in this great department of life ; let all the men of business take God's Word for their guide and God's glory for their aim ; in all their matters of work and trade, let the farmer, mechanic, the merchant, the buyer, the seller, bring to bear on their avocations the high sanctions of Christianity, and not only will they transmute all their duties, their toils, their losses and gains into the service of God ; but they will do more in impressing those with whom they have to do with the truth and importance of religion, than they could do by all their prayers, tears, and admonitions.

Christians not only, as we have seen, sustain church, domestic, social, and commercial relations, in all of which they are to manifest their religion; but they also sustain to *mankind at large, moral and benevolent relations, in which their faith must develop itself in effort to save them.* All of earth's inhabitants are one family. According to the teachings of Christ, all, the furthest off, are our neighbours. Every man has a claim on every other. God has imposed on us an obligation that we cannot cancel; to impart to all, and to each, all the good we can. Not to do good to others, is a frustration of the ulterior end of our existence; upon the same principle as the believer in the hour of his conversion was made the subject of the greatest of all blessings, he becomes bound by the most pressing and tender of all obligations to be the medium of those blessings to others. It is just as much the duty of each disciple to diffuse the gospel, as it was to embrace it. The last great command of Christ makes it the main duty and high privilege of each and all of His flock to aid in the world's conversion. Our very conversion is but a means to an end, and that end is the salvation of sinners, at home and abroad. We speak scripturally when we say that the believer who does not somewhere, between his conversion and his death, win one sinner to

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Christ, misses the great end of his redemption. This is a great standing law of the new dispensation, that can neither be revoked nor evaded.

This position being admitted, then it follows that the missionary enterprise is not a modern conception engrafted on the religion of Christ, but is as much one of the genuine forms and developments of faith in Christ, as baptism, prayer, and brotherly love. Christ was the great model Missionary; the apostles were missionaries; all the members of the primitive churches were missionaries; the gospel itself is as diffusive as the light of heaven; and this spirit, Christians, in this day, must possess, or they are less than the least of all saints, in more senses than one. You cannot define New-Testament religion, without including, as one of its essential elements, the missionary spirit.

Or look at the matter in another light. The whole heathen world are still unconverted. At home, tens of thousands are in the deepest ignorance, and are the slaves of the vilest sins. Each succeeding wave of time bears off millions of the unredeemed to the everlasting damnation of hell. Christians have the gospel, the only remedy for this appalling evil. The church is the only agent in the universe for conveying to the unsaved the gospel, and converting them to Christ. Her opportunities for doing so are many and

multiform. God has so arranged matters that we may stay at home, and yet reach and save these dark masses as effectually as if they were at our doors. Now, can one be a Christian in the true sense of the term, without earnest cares, efforts, and self-denials to save the perishing amid such circumstances as these? Is that man's religion more than a name, who looks on composedly and sees souls sink down to perdition by thousands a day, without putting forth his hands to arrest the mighty ruin? No; and it is high time that Christianity was better understood and acted out. The unbelief of men at home will never be overcome till Christians, in addition to their faith, abound in prayers and self-denying exertions to spread the empire of Christ. "A Christian is the highest style of man," and a Christ-like missionary is the highest style of Christian. The fullest and most symmetrical embodiment of the religious principle, the nearest reduplication of Christ's character in our midst, is the man who, in addition to his personal holiness, goes out of himself in self-denying exertions to save a lost world. Never will modern Christians, in any adequate sense, represent Christ and His religion till they cease to insulate themselves from the dying world around them; and abandon themselves in zeal and activity for the diffusion of the gospel.

children who see in their professing parents the same pride and worldliness they see in others !

Woe to the world if all the professed friends of Christ were Christians of this grade. So far as the honour of Christ, and the good of the world are concerned, better that they had never been born ; or being born, had never assumed Christ's name. Of all arguments against Christianity, their lives are the most formidable. They strike Christ's ministers dumb. They wound and discourage the good, and provoke the ridicule and scorn of the bad. They justify and harden the wicked in their iniquity. The destruction of souls will, on the day of eternity, lie at their door. They hinder the world's conversion more than all Christ's outward foes.

Now, let all such misnamed Christians be called to repentance, and rise up to that standard of godliness that the Bible and the world's wants demand ; or, if they will not put away their idols and reform, it will be best for all concerned, that they be excluded from our churches. Let the time come when Christians shall everywhere act out the principles of the gospel ; let sceptics live amid neighbours whose religious example shines brightly ; let the rising generation have parents who reflect in their daily walk the image of Christ ; let the unbelieving husbands have wives who, by their meekness, gentleness, prayfulness,

and compassion, adorn their profession. In fine, let all the visible Zion of God live as it becomes the gospel of Christ, and men's intellects everywhere will be won to Christ, and thus a mighty vantage-ground be gained in effecting their conversion. The crowning argument for the truth of the gospel will then be given and the great triumph achieved.

It not only attracts attention, convinces the judgment, but removes objections. Most of the objections raised against the religion of Christ are drawn from the inconsistent lives of professing Christians. France was once made a nation of atheists by the corruption of the Romish church. The leading English infidels of the last century avowed that their disbelief in Christianity was caused by the corruptions and immorality of the established church. From this source, Hume, the Goliath of scepticism, drew some of his weapons of attack, and it is acknowledged on all hands that the different types of modern infidelity on the continent of Europe had their origin in the perversions and inconsistencies of the so-called churches of Christ.

And every pastor knows that one of the greatest obstacles in the way of bringing men to Christ, are the objections they derive from the flagrant contradictions between the professions and con-

duct of Christians. To arouse the impenitent to a sense of their danger, we appeal to the Scriptures ; to justify their irreligion, they appeal to the inconsistent lives of Christians. We seek to win them by preaching the pure life, the holy precepts, and the sublime death of Christ, by calling on them to judge the disciple by his Lord ; they resist our appeals by judging the Lord by His followers, and making His religion responsible for the faults of its friends. We reply by pointing to some in the churches who adorn their profession ; they evade us again by referring to some who disgrace theirs. These, like the falling star, fill the entire field of their vision. We aim to convince their minds and move their hearts by arguments drawn from prophecy, miracles, and the progress of the gospel, in reforming nations ; they break the force of our reasoning, and ward off our appeals by calling to mind some church-member who has a name to live, while he is dead.

In vain may we complain of this injustice and unfairness on the part of the world toward the friends of Christ. We cannot drive them from this sheet-anchor excuse ; in vain may we tell them that they magnify our failings into crimes ; that there is neither logic nor justice in holding Christianity responsible for the short-comings of some of its professors. From this refuge

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they will not be driven, though they have mistaken a mud-shed for a tower.

How can this wide-spread objection be taken from the impenitent? How can we induce in them the conviction that they have no cloak for their sins? How can we shut them up to the necessity of taking all the blame and shame of their irreligion to themselves, and thereby gain a third mighty vantage-ground in bringing them to Christ? Not (and let all the churches mark it) merely by preaching religion, not by writing religion, nor by arguing religion, nor by talking religion, nor by singing nor shouting, nor by praying religion; *but by acting religion.* Let our faith develop itself in making "us blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation;" let our religious principles take the form of self-denying exertions to do good and get good; let the religion of Christ, in some good degree, reappear in the lives of its professors, and the cavilling, carping world will be silenced and excuseless. The religion of Christ, thus exemplified, will be more effectual in refuting objections, than ten thousand voices; more efficient in answering excuses than a thousand volumes; and thereby accomplish a mighty work in removing one of the great stumbling-blocks out of the way of men's conversion.

FURTHERMORE: PIETY OF A HIGH GRADE NOT ONLY REMOVES OBJECTIONS BUT WINS ESTEEM. The irreligious sometimes *talk* as if they considered zealous Christians over-scrupulous, when they stand upon their principles and refuse to yield a sinful compliance with the spirit and practice of the multitude, when really they *think* no such thing. When they see a Christian truly consistent in his conduct, their hearts are constrained to do him homage; yea, to do homage to the religion he professes. In consistent personal religion there is something so intrinsically lovely and winning that the most wicked profoundly respect and venerate it. Piety of the right type always secures the esteem of men's judgments and consciences, however much, in some of its aspects, it may excite the dislike of their hearts. However far men may, in heart and life, depart from God, their reason and conscience will always condemn their course, and with awe and admiration approve the conduct of those who follow Christ fully. While the hearts of the wicked are averse to the righteous just in proportion as the tempers and conduct of the pious are unlike and rebuke those of the wicked, it is at the same time equally true that the better and nobler part of man's nature will admire and confide in the people of Christ just in proportion as they are consistently and scripturally religious.

That mankind venerate high-toned religion is apparent from facts. Why had they rather make bargains, form connexions, and deal with those who serve God than with those who serve Him not? Why had wicked, sceptical young men rather, other things being equal, select as partners for life pious young ladies than those who are not? Why had parents, though infidels themselves, rather send their children to religious than to irreligious teachers? Why had unbelievers, in moving to new countries, rather settle in a community of praying, Bible-reading, church-going people, than in a community of infidels? Why, in Florida some years ago, did the infuriated Seminoles spare the missionary and his family while butchering all the whites besides? Why, in times of danger, calamity, and death, do the impenitent so much desire the presence and prayers of the pious? Let a man make a profession of religion and dishonour that profession, and he at once sinks in the estimation of his ungodly companions. But let another profess, and go on to adorn that profession, and nothing will so much raise him in the esteem of the world. Of all characters, the fairest, the most lovely in the eye of the world, is the well-developed Christian character.

Would you, then, professors of religion, inspire the unconverted with the highest appreciation of

your religion? would you win hearts for your Master? then rise up from the dust of self-seeking, and put on the shining garments of salvation. In this way your piety will become converting, because it is attractive.

Personal religion not only removes objections, *but is the most powerful appeal to the consciences of the unbelieving.* The consistently religious man says to the ungodly, more eloquently and urgently than all others, "We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you. Come, then, with us, and we will do thee good." The example of the godly man is a living, standing memento to all around him of Christ, death, and eternity. His life and character urge on others the religion of his Lord in tones they must hear and understand. Who invite a slumbering world to Christ so pressingly as they who give proof of having gone to Christ themselves? Who teach the world so well how to believe as they who walk by faith? Who inculcate so effectually the great work of repentance as they who hate, sorrow over, and forsake all sin? Who reprove pride like the humble? Who warn men so awfully against going to hell as those who proclaim by their conduct that they have forsaken destruction's broad pathway? Who point out the way to heaven so plainly as those who walk in that way? Who so overwhelmingly

draw men after them to heaven as "those who declare *plainly* that they seek a country?"

A sermon by an angel every day would not as deeply stir the conscience of the unbelieving husband as does the religious example of his wife. The God of grace has ~~no~~ mightier instrumentality to bring to bear on depraved man than a holy life. In ~~the~~ personal religion of His people Jesus is personated, and comes nigh to the unbelieving. If the plea of a striking religious example does not awaken ~~the~~ impenitent beholder, then ~~he~~ loves darkness rather than light. Most likely the next appliance God will bring to bear on him will be heavy afflictions. God did much for man's salvation in giving him His Word to teach him, His Son to die for him, and His Spirit to sanctify him. He shews still further His deep concern for the sinner by calling and beseeching him through His ministry; but when He places in their communities and families His own redeemed, obedient children, He has reached His ultimatum in the way of mercy.

In fine, practical religion not only catches the attention, convinces the judgment, removes objections, wins esteem, and arouses the conscience, *but converts to Christ*. Exemplified religion does not convert sinners meritoriously. That were an invasion of the work of Christ.

Nor efficiently. That were an invasion of the influence of the Holy Spirit ; but, like the written and preached truth, it converts to Christ instrumentally. God's Spirit must make the truth efficacious in the sinner's conversion, whether it be read, heard, or seen in the conduct of Christians. If in any of our attempts to convert the world we confound the instrumentalities of grace with the grace of instrumentalities, disappointment and defeat await us.

Now, instrumentally considered, some unbelievers are more difficult to convert than others. Some men are both Bible-proof and sermon-proof. This class can only be reached, if reached at all, by Christ-like piety. Thousands on earth, and millions in heaven, have been won to Christ by this means. Such convert because they evidence their conversion. They allure to brighter worlds because they lead the way.

It is easy to see how such Christians save souls from death. In the life of such Christians, the ungodly having before them an end of all controversy as to the reality of the Christian religion ; seeing in persons of like passions, age, occupations with themselves marked proofs of the practicability and desirableness of personal religion ; seeing neighbours humble, meek, forgiving, benevolent, and prayerful, whom they knew once to be proud, vain, revengeful, covet-

ous, and profane ; beholding those who were once their companions in sin now wearing the name and reflecting the image of Christ ; being both condemned and encouraged by such instances of piety, being forced to draw the contrast between the character and prospects of such and their own unhappy circumstances, and these appeals coming to their hearts and consciences through tender ties, they are most powerfully drawn away from the path of death to Christ the sinner's friend.

Oh, what a mighty motive this to all Christians to exhibit before the world the bright light of personal holiness ! All cannot be Luthers to reform countries, nor Whitefields to preach to thousands, nor Judsons to translate the Scriptures into other tongues ; all are not rich that they may give to the cause of Christ their thousands, nor learned that they may write and argue for Christ ; all cannot become ministers, nor missionaries, nor even Sabbath-school teachers ; all ought not to pray in public. But all Christians of both sexes, however poor and obscure, can so possess and display the religion of Christ, as not only to die safely and augment their bliss in eternity, but so as to save souls and honour Christ.

Piety of this grade is not only the key to Paradise but the key to men's hearts. While

the truth is being read from the Bible, and proclaimed from the pulpit, let all the members of our churches second and enforce that truth by the silent eloquence of holy lives, and the world's conversion will move forward at home and abroad with primitive speed. "A nation will be born in a day." Millennial dawn will blush deeper and deeper, the sun of truth will rise on our darkened world, and revivals will roll from land to land, like the waves of the mighty deep. The way to hell will then soon become a dreary waste, and the way to heaven crowded with converts as numerous and as resplendent as the stars that bestud the broad galaxy of the midnight heavens. Come that day! Who would not pray, and live, and labour, for such a glorious state of things?

CHAPTER V.

MEANS TO BE USED FOR THE ATTAINMENT
OF THE PIETY RECOMMENDED.

HAVING pointed out the leading features of the religion that evidences its own truth, and converts the world ; having seen the particulars in which it must appear, and then seen how it operates in converting mankind ; the question now arises, How can such a standard of practical religion be reached ? Says an objector, such a type of religion is most desirable and important, but it is impracticable for the mass of professors, too refined and difficult for the generality of the friends of Christ ; and many labouring under this mischievous mistake, have contented themselves with just as much religion as is customary. They aim to incumber themselves with no more than will allow them to carry the world along with them to heaven. They desire and strive for no more religion than will keep them out of the world of woe.

Never did the unbelieving heart frame a more unscriptural objection. Millions of Christians environed with far more difficulties, and far fewer advantages than Christians have now, have more than reached the standard we are here pleading for. If Christians would only arise from their sluggish repose and go about the matter in the right way, they would find it much easier to be whole-hearted Christians, than to work out that difficult problem, how near perdition's edge they can approach, and yet reach the heavenly world. God has promised all needed help. He is willing to grant the Spirit's influences. In Christ, our Master and Model, all fulness dwells. Hence, eminent piety is within the reach of all. The piety of Moses, Daniel, and Paul, is as much our imperative duty as it is our glorious privilege. Let no one pronounce elevated piety impracticable till he has, in God's own prescribed way, made the experiment. But how, it is most pertinent to inquire, can such a type of religion be reached?

In order to the exhibition of the religion of Christ in our tempers and conduct, there must be implanted in the soul the religious principle. A man must be religious in the sight of God before he can appear so in the sight of man. As in nature, so in grace, no effect can exceed its cause. In religion there are two fundamental

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propositions, equally true and important. One is, as there can be no religious principle, unless it is succeeded by religious practice ; so there can be no religious practice unless it is preceded by religious principle. A man's life cannot be in habitual contradiction to his bias. A good tree cannot be made to bear evil fruit ; neither can a corrupt tree be made to bear good fruit.

You may, by pruning off the dead limbs and loosening and manuring the earth around the roots of the stunted, withered tree, resuscitate it and make it fruit-bearing. But no matter how much you may dig about and enrich the roots of the dead tree, no matter how propitious the sunbeams and showers may be, it will remain dead. The best food and the best nursing in the world cannot make the dead infant live and grow. Before, in either case, there can be growth and improvement, there must exist that mysterious thing we call life. So with the case in hand. Man by nature "is dead in trespasses and in sin." Before there can be any external religious improvement, he must be quickened by the power of God, and have imparted to his soul spiritual life. Life of any kind must come from God. There is no innate germ of goodness in man which he can cultivate and develop into religion, until he has been born again of the Spirit ; until man has had imparted to him, by

the Holy Ghost, that sublime principle of life which Jesus Christ died to procure, all efforts to form a religious character is but feeding death and cultivating sterility.

Just here thousands are fatally erring. They are attempting to rear a superstructure of practical godliness, without first laying the foundation of "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." No observance of the means of grace, no prayers, no self-denial, no efforts, no compliance with divine ordinances, can make a man in reality and in appearance religious, until he has, by faith in the great atonement, "passed from death unto life." It is as unscriptural as it is unphilosophical, to suppose there can be any attainments made in practical religion, until there has been exercised in the person and work of Christ, a penitential faith. In religion a man will go just as far as he believes, and no further. His zeal, holiness, humility, prayerfulness, happiness, and usefulness, will be just in proportion to the strength of his faith.

Why are there so many professors who are dead while they have a name to live? Why are there so many others that reflect so faintly the image of Christ? In fine, why is the religion of the mass of modern Christians so partial, fickle, and indistinct? It is because many have a

saving faith, no realising conviction of the truth and importance of sacred things. In others there is a feeble, flickering, faltering faith, and the consequence is that such are feeble, dwarfish Christians, doing no good, and finally saved "so as by fire." And then in all ages a few have been eminently and strikingly religious. Such were the primitive Christians. Such were Luther, Menno, Newton, Fuller, Scott, Judson, Chalmers, and a host of others, both in the ministry and in the laity. Now, what was it that so shaped, moulded, and directed the spirits and conduct of these men? What made them the wonder and the hope of the world? What was the secret of their vast superiority over the mass of Christians in practical religion, and consequently in point of usefulness? Think you that educational or domestic or social or national influences made them what they were? They attained their eminence in holiness and usefulness, says one, because of their incessant, earnest prayerfulness; but what made them so prayerful? Says another, their eminence in religion is ascribable to their diligence and self-denials; but what influence made them so industrious and self-denying? Says another, their boldness rendered them so conspicuous in the cause they professed; but what inspired them with such boldness? Says another, their

ardent love for Christ and souls shaped their characters, and gave them their influence. True ; but what induced them to love Christ and souls so intensely ? Their model characters and power for good, says still another, are attributable to their great spirituality. Very true ; but what imparted to them their spirituality ? The great principle that transformed and ennobled their characters, that impelled them to their mighty achievements for God, was their strong faith in the person, cross, presence, and promise of Jesus Christ. Their faith in God was the first of their graces, and the source of the rest. Their prayerfulness, their diligence, their boldness, their labours of love, were but the embodiment of their faith in their crucified, risen, reigning Lord.

The truth is, not only is faith the great instrumentality by which our relations to God's law and government are adjusted, by which our sins are forgiven and our natures changed, but it is the great inward principle that prompts to holiness of life. And if this be so, then, in order to religious improvement, we must seek an increase of our faith. Let us begin with the cause of the evil. Let us repent of the great sin of unbelief. We must not rest contented while our convictions of the truth and importance of the gospel are cold and inoperative. We must

strive and pray and meditate till the great facts of Christianity become to us engrossing realities. Jesus Christ must be so received and trusted in as to be to us, not merely a historical personage, but a living, enveloping, present Saviour. We must beg God so to purge from the soul's eye the films and mists of unbelief, that we may discern distinctly and realisingly the way of salvation. It must grow till it becomes "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Dear reader, covet a strong faith in the Lord Jesus more than gold, or fame, or pleasures. Only have faith in Christ, and you have everything else. Your resources then are as exhaustless as God himself. Faith in Jesus is religion—is the all-inclusive germ which involves within it every other grace.

If, then, you would attain Christlike piety, see to it that your faith is of the right kind, and then it grows exceedingly. See to it that it is not an affair that you transact with Christ at your conversion, but that it is a life-long habit. Be able to say, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." Then the plant of grace will be in a good soil.

A second means of elevating the standard of personal religion is *a more distinct recognition of and a more earnest dependence on the agency of the Holy Spirit.* Christians, in their efforts

to grow in grace and impart grace, practically ignore the Spirit's personality and agency. It may be well questioned whether our defective and erroneous views of the Spirit's office and work are not the grand cause of our puny piety and inefficiency. Luther accomplished the great Reformation of the sixteenth century by bringing out, explaining, defending, and proclaiming the death of Christ as the only means of the sinner's justification before God. Now, before the church of Christ will ever rise up to that high standard of holiness which the exigencies of the world so imperatively demand, there must be effected a second great reformation in regard to the work of the Spirit. By all means let us maintain and depend on the death of the second person in the Trinity, as the only means of taking away our guilt and securing to us a right and title to heaven. But it is equally as important that we maintain and depend on the agency of the third, to renew our natures and transform us into the likeness of Christ. What Christ did *for* us becomes effectual in our salvation, because it is followed by the Spirit's working *in* us.

What Christ wrought for us was done unsolicited and unasked. Not so with the Spirit. Those who most covet, seek, and prize the helps of this heavenly agent, generally have vouchsafed unto them the largest measure of His gracious

influences. The Scriptures of God shew that indolence, prayerlessness, and unholy tempers grieve and repel the great Sanctifier ; and on the other hand, prayerfulness, activity, and holy tempers invite and secure His presence and agency. So that the great law of obtaining the Spirit is that we toil, watch, and pray, as if we could make ourselves holy ; and at the same time that we depend upon, and pray for the Spirit's influences as if all absolutely depended on this celestial agent.

The indispensableness of an augmented measure of the Spirit's influences in order to spiritual growth will appear if you consider the nature of spiritual progress, and the obstacles in the way. There are very many inward and outward difficulties in the way of religious improvement, which in our own unaided strength we can no more overcome than we can create a new star, or hurl the sun from its orbit. In this work, without God we can do nothing. Without the direct aids of the Spirit, the best Christian on earth, with all his attainments, would never overcome another sin, never gain another triumph over the world, never demolish another idol, nor escape another snare of Satan. Can we, amid so many counter-influences, nourish and develop the germ of life ? Can human might resist the heart's depraved tendency, the world's

current, and Satan's wiles? Without the Spirit's gracious helps we may become refined, moral, and in one sense know and believe the truth; but without His helps there cannot be created in us and developed through us the principles of grace. No power in the universe, save that of the Holy Ghost, can make a New-Testament Christian. Genuine religion is just as much His workmanship as the physical world. We know this doctrine is liable to misapprehension and abuse; still no truth is more plainly revealed in the Scriptures, and the great requisite in order to become a full-grown, vigorous Christian, is a deep practical persuasion of our dependence on the promised Spirit.

Let all our endeavours after a fuller possession and development of the Christian principle, be put forth with a penetrating conviction of our need of the promptings and leadings of the Spirit. Let us fear grieving Him more than we would fear the frown of all creation. Let us watch and pray against every feeling, word, and act, that would in the least restrain His presence and quench His influences. Let us cultivate the tempers, speak the words, and do the things that will invite and secure His continued indwelling. Should we provoke Him to abandon us, let us search and fast, and pray, and repent, till He re-enters and fills our bosoms with His

tranquillising joys. When there are difficulties to be overcome, trials to be borne, temptations to be resisted, or duties to be performed, let us go to God with the faith and simplicity of little children, and ask Him for His Spirit to help in these times of need. Have you a besetting sin that stunts your spiritual growth and impairs your religious influence? Ask for the Spirit, that you may see the guilt of it; mourn over it and be enabled to forsake it. Are you in darkness? Ask the Father in the name of the Son, for the Spirit, that you may be taught of God and guided into all truth. Are you wavering, weak, and cast down? Secure the indwelling of the Comforter, and you will be confirmed, strengthened, and encouraged.

We give it as the result of much thought, that in order to a more thorough exemplification of the gospel, we must more distinctly recognise, more firmly believe in, and more earnestly seek an increased measure of the influences of the Holy Ghost.

In order to religious growth, the soul must receive constant nourishment. Appropriate food is not more essential to the growth and vigour of the natural, than it is to the spiritual infant; and what is the nourishment by which the soul grows and thrives? Not science, not ethics, not the opinions of men, but "the truth as it is in

Jesus." Of young converts the apostle Peter says, "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." It has been said, it matters not what a man believes, or whether he believes anything, so that he does what is right. As well say, it matters not what a man eats, or whether he eat at all, so that he lives. We can no more live and grow spiritually without eating the "living bread that came down from heaven," than we can live and grow bodily without eating wholesome food. Error is just as hurtful to the soul as poison is to the body. Hence no more should that minister be called a bigot, who is greatly anxious that his people should believe only the truth of God, than the physician who, by his pen and tongue, contends for wholesome diet.

But the Scriptures do not necessarily and unconditionally become spiritual nutriment to our souls.

(a.) *They must be read.* An unread Bible is an ambiguous sign of a low state of religion. To suppose that one can make attainments in grace, without a knowledge of God's Word, is to suppose that the end can be reached without the means. Such a supposition depreciates and makes nugatory the word of life.

We suppose, however, most professors read the Scriptures. But few can be found in Protestant

churches who have not read them through. The deficiency is in the *manner* in which they are read. It is our deliberate conviction that one of the reasons why Christians make such slow and interrupted progress in religion, is the coldness, inattention, irreverence, formality, and prayerlessness, with which the Bible is perused. Hence we say :

(*b.*) Again, that in order to make the Scriptures the means of our sanctification and religious growth, they must be *read with devout meditation*. The best and most nutritious food taken into the stomach, without undergoing the process of digestion, becomes positively pernicious. Before it can be incorporated into the animal economy, it must undergo this indispensable process. So the truth of God received into the head, or slumbering in the memory without being "marked, learned, and inwardly digested," not only contributes nothing to the moral growth of the soul, but becomes "a savour of death unto death." During the day the cow browses hither and thither, and gathers into her stomach a mass of appropriate, yet undigested food. When nightfall comes, she lies down, regurgitates that food, at her leisure masticates it, and fits it for nourishment. So let the child of grace have his eyes and ears open, and gather from the Scriptures, from the pulpit, from providence and

nature, into the repository of his memory, the truth of God; and then let him, during the "night watches," like David; or "at eventide," like Isaac; or during a season set apart for the purpose, take that truth and ponder it, pray over it, and thereby convert it into spiritual pabulum for his soul. In this way the great facts and doctrines of the gospel will no longer be dead events in the annals of the past, and dry abstractions for speculations, but will be radiant realities, shaping and controlling the feelings, sentiments, and conduct.

See that eminent saint who stands distinguished in all the country around, for his sanctity, benevolence, and as one who walks with God. He reached this elevation by habitually and seriously pondering sacred things. If you go back into his history for the last twenty years, you would find that those moments that others waste in frivolous thinking and listless vacuity, he employed in heavenly meditation.

In sanctifying through the truth, God works no miracles, violates no law of our mind. It transforms and moulds us into the image of its Author, just in proportion as it impresses us; and it impresses us just in proportion as it is digested. Some Christians are ever reading and hearing the truth, and are none the better for it. Wherefore? Because the truth makes

no impression ; and why does the truth fail to do this ? Because it is read and heard listlessly. How many while away many of their best hours in moving the eye mechanically and formally over God's Book, without ever entering into its meaning. Never will such grow in religion till this habit is broken. The Scriptures themselves are emphatic on this point. "*Search* the Scriptures ;" "Take *heed* how you hear ;" "*Consider* what we say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things ;" "*Prove* all things ; hold fast that which is good." "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest *heed* to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." "Be not unwise, but *understand* what the will of the Lord is." "*Think* on these things."

Reader, would you become an intelligent, well-proportioned disciple of Christ ? Then ponder the truths of the gospel till your views of them are clear, discriminating, and affecting. Think on these things till you can distinguish between law and gospel.

Would you have your faith become strong, your hopes bright, and your character beautified with the graces of the Spirit, think it not enough that you can weep at a description of the Saviour's sufferings, but dwell on the theme till you have clear and impressive views of the con-

nexion between His death and your salvation. Would you become more and more like Christ, and more the admiration and hope of the world? Then consider the doctrines and promises of the gospel till your very soul takes their type and mould, till they are incorporated into the economy of your moral natures. In no other way will you ever grow in grace. You will never become eminent Christians upon easier terms ; and you will grow in the religion of Christ just in proportion as you sincerely pursue this course.

(c.) In order to have the Scriptures become food and principle unto your soul, they *must be studied in prayerful dependence on the Spirit's influences*. The Bible is a revelation from God *unto us* ; before the truth is revealed *into us*, the same Spirit that indited it must take it from the written page and give it a penetrating power. The Bible is all-needed external light ; before it can become the means of spiritual growth unto us, the Spirit must give us internal vision for that light. Without the Spirit's teachings, one may know the Scriptures intellectually, but not savingly. No one ever read and studied himself into a saving knowledge of God's truth. There is a seal to God's Book that nothing but the Holy Ghost can take away. There is a film in the way of a converting, sanctifying view of the truth that nothing but the Holy Ghost can

remove. There is a mystery and repulsiveness that, to a carnal mind, invest the peculiar doctrines of the Bible that nothing but the light of the Holy Ghost can dispel. There is a relish requisite to a profitable study of the Scriptures that nothing but the Holy Ghost can impart. It is only when the Spirit that indited the sacred text, takes it from the page and breathes it into the heart, that we can comprehend its meaning, be touched by its beauty, stirred by its remonstrances, animated by its promises, take complexion from its motives, and directions from its prescriptions.

(d.) The Scriptures must also be *studied with the profoundest reverence, in order to produce in us the fruits of holy living*. The Bible is as much a communication from God, as if we had seen His hand writing it on the face of the heavens. It is not Moses, Isaiah, David, Daniel, Matthew, Luke, John, Paul, and Peter, writing to us, but God writing to us through these men. Remember, whenever your eye traces its pages, you are pondering ideas that from eternity existed in the mind of Jehovah. Remember, when you open its pages, you are holding an interview with your Maker, Lawgiver, and Saviour, as to how you are to escape hell and reach heaven. When the time comes to peruse the oracles of God, you should put your mind into a solemn

frame, put away all worldly thoughts, and give it in charge to your soul to "hear what God the Lord will speak." Such a state of mind, habitually maintained toward the Word of God, will much conduce to its moulding and transforming the life and character.

(e.) You will not read the Word of God to practical purpose, unless you study it with a profound *teachableness*. One of the great hindrances to the full power of God's truth over the heart and life of believers, is systems previously imbibed from human sources. Vast numbers, among even Protestants, derive their religious opinions from other than the divinely-accredited rule of faith and practice. Some, by their own reason, first determine what God should and what He should not require of His creatures; and then appeal to the Scriptures for confirmation of their self-devised systems. Others read the Bible to judge and try it by the views they inherited from their parents; and then what hundreds approach God's Book preoccupied with and committed to the standards of their churches! Human creeds had been subscribed to before the Bible was opened. If all these creeds, systems, and opinions, were tried by the Scriptures and not the Scriptures by them, then they would not be so productive of mischief. How many books have been written to make the

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Bible countenance and support doctrines and practices emanating from human authority! How much learning, logic, talents, and exegesis have been brought in contribution to make the Scriptures accredit and indorse dogmas that are not only *unscriptural*, but *antiscritptural*!

Now, such readers not only depreciate and despise the Word of God; they not only adopt principles which, in their development, would render the Word of God needless; but must, from the nature of the case, be themselves partial believers and doers of the word. With far different views must we study the Word of God, to be essentially sanctified and improved thereby. To be enlightened and stirred by the lively oracles, we must go to them, not for advice, but for law; we must read, not to dictate, but to learn and obey. There must be that openness to conviction, that freedom from biases and prepossessions that will prompt us as we open the Divine Volume to pray, "Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth." "Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?" Under the abiding conviction that all we can know, as to what will please, and what will displease God, is revealed in His Word, let us peruse it with the previous prayerful determination that we will believe whatever it says, and do whatever it commands us. Let it be the firmest purpose of the mind, that as book after

book, and chapter after chapter, and verse after verse, comes under review, we will, in prayerful dependence on the Spirit's aid, and human help, if need be, seek to know the will of God, and believe it, love it, and contend for it, however crossing to our own feelings and views, or the feelings and views of the world. Such a reader of the Bible will certainly grow in religion. He takes the very attitude to please God and make full proof of the saving power of His truth.

(f.) To have the truth of God produce in our mind, heart, and life its designed effect, it must be read and heard with *self-application*. The Bible is a message from God to us individually. It isolates every man from every other, and imposes on him the obligation, and then offers him the means and the motives to read, believe, and be holy. It makes religion an individual transaction between its Author and the sinner. Hence it is a solemnly responsible thing to read the Bible. We never close its pages the same moral beings we were when we opened them. We have either been impressed more deeply with its saving type and mould, or its sacred truths have hardened and made us more indifferent. When then we open the Scriptures, there is no time nor scope for amusement or self-complacency. As portion after portion comes under review, the question should be, What bearing has this truth on *my*

heart and condition? If the Bible is a communication from my Maker, telling me how I may regain His lost favour and be admitted into His heavenly kingdom, then let me constantly compare myself with and examine myself by its requisitions, for fear I might be deceived in my right and title to heaven. Self-deception in religion is most common, most easy, and most fatal. Let me then, as I go through God's Book, test myself by its truths, lest at the last day I meet, in reply to the query, "Lord, have I not professed Thy name? done many things for Thy cause?" the cutting repulse, "Depart from me, ye accursed, I never knew you." Nor is it enough that I guard against delusion. For God's glory and the world's good, I should "leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ and go on unto perfection." This cannot be done unless I am in the habit of applying the truth of God to my own business and bosom.

Am I reading of the sufferings of Christ? Let me question myself as to whether I have a saving insight into those sufferings. Am I anon reading of repentance and faith? Let me not stop to bewilder myself as to how these graces can be both God's gifts and the sinner's duties, but send home to my conscience the great question, Have I, in the scriptural sense of the terms, exercised "repentance toward God, and faith

toward our Lord Jesus Christ?" Does the subject of baptism come under review? Let me question my soul solemnly whether I am carrying out the great practical design of this ordinance. Do I read a threatening? Let me stop, and with fear and trembling find out whether I am liable to the danger. Anon, do the promises present themselves? Can I claim them? Do I cross reproofs? The question must be settled whether I am censurable. Does the next chapter contain a description of the character and the reward of the righteous? I should deeply ponder whether I am such, that I may claim his reward. In this way the child of grace will not only be a reader and hearer, but "a doer of the truth." Every time he reads the Scriptures in this manner, he will have made advancement in spirituality. In this way the truth becomes to him nutritious, strengthening, transforming principles. In fine, this is one of the secrets of becoming a full-grown New-Testament Christian. Without it the soul will be impoverished and the character defective.

(g.) We say again, in order to bring ourselves fully under the saving effects of the truth of God, *we must study it ourselves, as it is revealed in the oracles of God.* Many, even among Protestants, only study truth second-handed. If they enter the temple of truth at all, it is leaning on

some favourite interpreter or preacher, who is looked to to tell them how the responses of the sacred oracles are to be taken. They take their religious opinions on trust from their church. They are contented only to view truth in the light it has been placed in by some good man.

Now, such a custom is not only unfavourable to the cultivation of piety, but it is to adopt, with the name of Protestants, one of the worst errors of Popery. To receive our religious opinions from any uninspired individual, no matter how learned, wise, and pious he may be, without testing them by the Word of God, is to invest that individual with the attribute of infallibility. To adopt our religious views from man without searching the Scriptures to see if these things are so, is to call that man master, and thereby prostrate our intellect and conscience at the foot of human authority. Moreover, there is not a doctrine in the Bible about which good men have not entertained diverse and conflicting views. Hence we can have no assurance that the views we imbibe from human authority are scriptural. All may be wrong, but all cannot be right; and it should also be borne in mind that the Scriptures, for all practical purposes, are plain and obvious. To understand them and be saved by them, it is not needful that we should be learned, or yet dig and dive. Like the

precious gold gleaming near the earth's surface, the way to believe, be holy, and reach heaven, shines on the very face of the Scriptures. A child may see and understand it. Nowhere else is the way of salvation as plain as it is in the divine Scriptures. For practical ends, the Bible is of all religious books the plainest. The man of common sense can understand it in this sense just as well as the learned divine. The expositions that learned men give of the Scriptures are valuable, often, as helps. Light shed upon the sacred text, from whatever source, should be accepted. But let the individual inquirer have the independence to bring them all to the test of "the law and testimony." Let him determine to see with his own eyes. Since he has a mind and God's word is sufficiently plain, let him see to it that no commentary of church, minister, divine, or parent shall be received as oracular any further than *he* perceives they accord with the Scriptures. We hold, that to be Christians in the right sense of that appellation, our creed must be, not what Calvin wrote, Luther said, or our church believes ; not what the best men or most men say, but what God has said.

It is said that Alexander the Great once visited Diogenes the Cynic while he was basking in the sunbeams in his tub. The great monarch was so delighted with the serenity of the philosopher,

that he said, "Diogenes! I am so charmed with you, that you need but ask and I will give you anything, to the half of my kingdom." The philosopher replied, "Please your majesty, I have only one favour to ask, and that is that you stand aside from between me and the sun, in whose beams I am now enjoying myself." So let the seekers after God's will say to the creeds and creed-makers, to the Luthers and Calvins, the Wesleys and the Fullers, stand aside from between us and the sunbeams of revelation. We need not the hand-lamps of your systems when the bright sun of God's Scriptures shines on us.

"To the law and to the testimony." In God's light let us seek light. From the pure fountain of truth let us derive all our doctrinal views ; by its decisions let us resolve all our doubts ; to its standard let us bring and test our religious state and experience ; and by its directions let us shape all our plans and regulate all our intercourse with the world. And then, in the broadest sense, the truth will become unto us "the power of God unto salvation," producing in our minds right sentiments, in our hearts right dispositions, and in our lives right actions.

Another *most important means of religious growth is exercise.* God made no servant of any grade, in any kingdom, to be idle ; and in

activity they grow and glorify Him. The strongest, most robust trees, are those that grow, not in shaded valleys, but on wintry heights, where they are rocked by the storms and scathed by the thunders. Why are the muscles so fully developed in the brawny arm of the blacksmith? Because it is his daily business to ply the huge hammer to the ringing anvil. Suppose a mother should confine her infant to the nursery, never allow it to make an effort to crawl, nor see the light of the sun. Such a child would not only not grow, but become positively unhealthy. How does it learn to crawl, and then to walk? By repeated attempts. In its first attempts it falls, and falls again; receives wounds, perhaps; does the mother forbid further attempts? No; she kisses and caresses it, and encourages it to try again and again, till, to the joy of both parent and child, it can walk without wearying, and run without fainting. Whose limbs are strung with the greatest strength? on whose cheeks does health bloom the ruddiest, and whose spirits are most buoyant and cheerful? Is it the man who chains himself to sedentary habits, always breathes the close atmosphere of the heated room, and lounges perpetually on couches of luxurious ease? No, verily; but the man who, despite of winter's cold and summer's heat, rises early and passes the day in athletic ex-

ercises. He is the vigorous, healthy, happy man.

Now, the same law obtains in grace. The man who grows in grace is not the man who shuts himself out from the world, and spends all his time in reading and meditation—though these are vastly important in their place—but the man who, in imitation of his Master's example, goes "about doing good." Perhaps the greatest defect in the piety of other ages, was that they pursued salvation too much as an insulated, selfish concern. Their piety was too dreamy, subtle, and abstract. In truth, many of these, who have been held up to the world as paragons of religion, were mere religious recluses, rather than Christians after the New Testament pattern. The cloister is not the place to attain spiritual manhood and vigour. Think you that such Christians as Paul, Brainerd, Martyn, and Judson, could have been trained in the soft, shady recesses of the closet? No; and we say to all Christians of both sexes, that if they would attain unto the stature of full-grown men and women in Christ, they must go out of themselves in efforts to do good.

Do you ask where, and about what you should employ yourself as a Christian? Why, in aiming at the correction of the world within, and the world without, only have a mind to work, and

you will, in every possible situation, find work to do for Christ. Do you ask, What can I do? The whole heathen world, nearly, is still unconverted. In your own land and country are tens of thousands sunk in the deepest ignorance, and the slaves of the vilest sins. In your own families are those who are Christless and hopeless. The youth of your community are to be brought into the Sabbath school and trained for the church and heaven. Bibles are to be circulated, tracts distributed, the poor, sick, and dying are to be visited and aided, the burdens of your brethren are to be borne, the ignorant taught, the wicked warned, and the bewildered guided to Christ. You never go about without having it in your power to do something for Christ and souls. There is not a day in the year in which you may not, in some way, spread the empire of Christ.

Now, every effort you make to do good, every exertion you put forth to spread the cause of God, either directly or indirectly, tends to strengthen and develop your own piety. Every time you exercise the gracious affections, you strengthen and spiritualise them. Every prayer you offer up for yourselves and others increases the spirit and confirms the habit of devotion. Every time you trust the promises of God, your faith in God becomes stronger and more influential.

Every time you restrain your inordinate passions, you make fresh attainments in Christian temperance. We say that faith produces works. It is also true that works produce faith. How can the beneficent, active Christian be faithless when he is constantly witnessing the triumphs of the gospel over men's hearts and lives? Every new conversion that he instrumentally effects, is an ocular verification of the divinity of the gospel. Can he doubt, when God actually seconds and blesses his efforts to the salvation of others? Christian! do understand this matter. Your faith in the atoning cross of Christ, first as a principle, prompts you to good works; and then efforts put forth, not only save souls, but strengthen your faith, intensify your love, and brighten your hopes. Upon this principle, in watering others, we ourselves are refreshed. In this way efforts to dispel darkness from other minds and other lands, scatter clouds from our own souls. In caring and doing for the happiness of others, we open in our own bosoms a pure fountain that will flow on when the heavens are no more. The best way to sanctify and refine our own hearts and characters, is to go out of ourselves and exert our powers, mortal and immortal, to save others.

It is by forgetting this principle that many pastors fail to improve the piety of their mem-

bers. They censure, they scold, complain, and lecture: they preach on the great facts, doctrines, and promises of the gospel, and still their membership are comfortless, useless, and lukewarm; and why? Mainly because they are idlers in the vineyard of God. Verily, this will never do. The members of our churches must be put to work for Christ, or they will not only not grow in grace, but grow in worldliness till expulsion will be inevitable. Action! action! must be the bannered motto of every church, or its members will remain spiritual dwarfs. Let pastors generally do what the pastors of the German Baptist churches have done. find for each member a post of activity, and keep them at it, and then the needed reformation will commence.

Another means of spiritual improvement is constant attention to the details of religion. The world's history shews that all men who have been eminent for success in any department of life, have been men of painstaking detail. How do men ordinarily become wealthy? By prudence and economy in little things. Pounds are gained by saving the pence. How do men become learned? Not by one magic, mental effort, but by toiling on through years, doing a million of little mental drudgeries. What was one of the great secrets of that power by which Napoleon

conquered all Europe? It was his power of detail. While his plans were vast, accurate, and daring, the part that every marshal, legion, captain, and company was to act, was so arranged as to subserve to victory. So with the apostle Paul; the greatest and most successful man for good that God has ever made. His principles, plans, and efforts, were world-wide. He did more for the world's conversion than any man that has lived; and yet in all his sermons and epistles, in all his efforts to save himself and others, there was a ceaseless circumstantial attention to every character, every want, and every duty. So, too, with the Son of God while on earth. The beauty, glory, and efficacy of His character consist in His having done great things occasionally, and attended constantly to the little incidents and duties of life. While the Redeemer now and then raised the dead, cast out devils, stilled the sea, at the same time, the most painstaking pastor, never equalled Him in filling up and adorning the small occasions and details of life. And how is a great, beautiful, symmetrical, worldly character, such as Havelock's, formed? They do not leap suddenly into maturity. Such characters are formed by long years of restraint, watchfulness, prudence, experience, and detailed virtues. Valuable characters are built up like valuable houses; first

laying the foundation in principle, then adding virtue to virtue, adjusting principle to duty, supplying wisdom from experience, till it appears in its maturity.

Now, all this applies with peculiar force to spiritual growth. In piety, advances in general are made by advances in particular. We can only attain religion in the aggregate by acquiring its details. We do not reach spiritual manhood by serving God in great things, on great occasions. We do not become Christ-like by being baptized, attending revivals, resisting great temptations, and performing great duties. The process by which our religious characters improve is the same as that by which they deteriorate, little and by little, step by step. One might as well attempt to read without attending to the combination of letters and the formation of syllables, as to learn the art of holiness without cultivating the individual graces and duties of which holiness consists. "For as words are the result of letters and syllables properly combined, so holiness is but the aggregate of individual graces harmoniously blended." Do you wish your spiritual garden to flourish, bloom with beauty, and yield fruit? Be often in it, rooting up the noxious weeds of sin, and watching and watering the flowers of each grace. Dig about, enrich, prune, prop, and water with

care the vine of each virtue, and you will attain to great Christian excellence. Is your faith growing weak? Make it a point to have it increased by prayer to God and meditation on His word. Have you declined in love to Christ? Rest not till it is kindled into a flame again, by thinking of His love to you. Have you fallen into the habit of reading and hearing the truth of God formally and coldly? Make no truce with your conscience till this heart-hardening and Spirit-grieving habit is broken, and the word of God is read and heard attentively, solemnly, and realisingly. Is some besetting sin gaining the mastery over you? Make it your business to strive, watch, and pray against that sin till it is overcome. Are you deficient in Christian meekness, gentleness, and forbearance? Study the character of the adorable Saviour, until in these respects you have imbibed His spirit and copied His example. Have ill feelings found a place in your heart towards some one? Be self-accuser till those feelings are dislodged from your bosom, and you have forgiven him. Do your thoughts wander in prayer? "Watch unto prayer," hold them to their duty by the curbing power of the will, till you acquire the difficult, yet indispensable habit of having your thoughts and feelings correspond with, and prompt your words in prayer.

In fine, by comparing yourself with scriptural precepts and examples, aim to find out all your defects in principle and in practice, and then, in God's strength and for God's glory, make the correction in every case. In this way you will grow, though slowly yet steadily, not disproportionately, but symmetrically and essentially.

By patient effort, make it the business of your life to overcome and abandon individual sins, and to acquire individual graces. "Add to your faith virtue ; and to virtue knowledge ; and to knowledge temperance ; and to temperance patience ; and to patience godliness ; and to godliness brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness charity." Now bring your diligence and prayers to bear on the correction of an evil habit ; anon to chasten an evil temper ; then to uproot a false principle and establish a true one. To-day marshal the soul's forces, and implore divine help to meet an affliction with patience ; and to-morrow to bear wrongs with meekness and losses with resignation. Search, the Scriptures with care, resist temptations with firmness, enjoy the blessings of life with moderation, examine the heart with scrutiny, and discharge all the little duties of life with diligence, and by so doing you will grow in religion rapidly, harmoniously, and beautifully.

Another most important means of religious improvement is *watchfulness*. Within us and around us are thousands of influences adverse and fatal to religious growth. Of all plants ever reared, the plant of grace requires the most care and watchfulness. Its enemies infest the earth and the air. Hence he who would advance in piety must constantly keep his eyes and ears open. He must daily look within and around fixedly. He must tread along the narrow way with a cautious step, examining every doubtful thing by the standard of the Word. How often are we overcome of the tempter from prayerless inattention! How vigilant must we be, what haste must we make, how early and prompt must we be in all our plans and undertakings to forestall the great enemy of our souls!

The command, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation," which Christ delivered in the gloomy garden of Gethsemane, should be heeded and obeyed by all who would be holy. Watch the first approaches of Satan and the occasions of his temptations. Every victory he gains over you increases his power, and diminishes your strength to resist him. Watch the motions and suggestions of the Spirit, or you may fail to secure His heavenly helps. Watch for opportunities for doing good. They invigorate the Christian graces. Watch the

indications of divine providence. When these are observed, they increase one's faith and school him for usefulness and heaven. Watch the heart : "Out of it are the issues of life." As is the heart, so will be the life and conduct. The character is the embodiment of the feelings and sentiments of the heart, be they right or wrong. There can be no growth in grace unless an attentive, scrutinising eye is kept upon the movements of the heart. Hence, watch against evil thoughts ; they, when indulged in, diffuse the chills of death through the soul and can no more comport with spiritual vigour than paralysis can comport with bodily activity. Watch against the risings of pride and ambition. By these angels fell. They must be suppressed, or all hope renounced of reaching the shining height. Watch against anger, malice, and revenge. These repel from the bosom the blessed Sanctifier, and open the soul to the devil, with his black train of guilt and woe. Watch against all rising of selfishness. This is the grand root of all sin. Unchecked, it will root all religion out of the soul, and cause it to disappear from the conduct. Watch against impure imaginations. These pollute the soul, and render it averse to all religious duties.

Guard also most vigilantly your habits. Watch against habits of sloth. This evil will cut the

sinews of our spirituality, and bind us down to earth. Watch, for the devil is watching to tempt and ruin you. The redeemed on earth and in heaven, God the Judge of all the earth, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, are watching with intense solicitude your struggles after holiness.

In order to reach a high grade of religion you must *live by system*. No man ever succeeded in anything important without system. In all God's works there is perfect order. One reason why some Christians make such meagre attainments in religion, is that they live at random. Like a ship on the ocean without chart, compass, or destination, they are driven about by every wind of doctrine, and every wave of influence. The Christian of rule and principle, like the ship governed by its chart and compass, with a bold front and swelling canvas, moves along the voyage of life safely, to the haven of eternal repose. One great governing principle of the disciple of Christ should be, that his religion must be first—first in order of time, and first in importance; everywhere and under all circumstances; that every other interest is to be secondary to the service of Christ; that if time falls short, the duties of the body and time are to yield to those of the soul and eternity. Living by this great rule will simplify the life and give all its concerns

a religious tendency. By adopting this principle, one will be guided in every perplexity and uncertainty; know what he should pursue and what he should shun. Let me first know that a Christian has committed himself to this high gospel principle, and I will tell, with prophetic certainty, what he will do in every emergency. He will have time for religion. He will rise early, redeem the time, and be regular in his habits of devotion. He will be regular in his habits of studying the word of God, and in his attendance in the house of prayer. He will be "diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." He will have a mind and time to work for the Lord. He will be the stanch friend of Sabbath schools and revivals. In every issue between the powers of darkness and light, he will be on the side of light, diligently and boldly vindicating the truth.

We would, then, lay an emphasis on system as a means of religious growth. All who have attained eminence in religion had a place for every duty and a duty for every place. How did Baxter write so many books, preach so many sermons, and visit so constantly a large congregation? By systematic industry. So, only have a time and place for all your duties, religious and worldly, and be prompt in discharging them; only determine to meet in their order

the claims of God, your neighbour, and your soul, and you will have made rapid progress in correcting irreligious and in forming religious habits.

Once more: there can be no permanent religious improvement without *perseverance*. From the nature of the case there must be retrogression, or a perpetual lifelong warfare. Religion is not like a piece of carpentry, that we may suspend for a while, and then return and resume it at the same stage of forwardness; but like a voyage up a rapid stream—the moment we cease to ply the oar we are driven backward. In religion, not to proceed, is to draw back. It was a maxim of one of the mightiest of the ancient generals, to regard “nothing done while there remained any thing to do.” By acting on this motto, Cæsar subjugated the known world. Amid all who shine in the annals of redemption, none have copied so nearly the example of his Master as the apostle Paul. No other Christian has made such high attainments in religion; and one of the great secrets of his spiritual eminence was his being governed in serving Christ by the same motto that Cæsar was in war. The means by which he reached his high standard of holiness he gives in these beautiful words, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are

behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Up to the time he wrote these words, he had done more to save the world than all other men. He had surpassed all others in personal piety ; yet all this he deemed unworthy of recollection, but pressed on to still greater attainments in grace and usefulness.

In no other way, and upon no easier terms, can we reach the scriptural standard of religion. Half-hearted, sluggish exertions, will never avail. Some sick persons may get well without taking medicine. Some soils will produce crops without cultivation. Now and then a man gets a fortune without industry ; but, since the fall of Adam, no one has ever become holy without perpetual vigilance, perpetual prayerfulness, perpetual reference to the will of God—without perpetual self-restraint and attention to the eye of Him who seeth in secret. All Scripture and experience go to shew that in order to attain holiness, one must covet and pursue it more than riches, honours, and pleasures, and be willing to forego everything for it. The mighty care must be fixed upon the heart from morning till night, swallow up everything else, and lead to ceaseless diligence. It must be the firmest purpose of the soul, that sin shall not have the

dominion over us ; and if overcome by it, we must renew the conflict with increased prayerfulness and vigour, till we are victorious. Thirty years employed in mortifying a bad passion, and correcting a bad habit, should not be regretted.

In sum, there must be *earnest attention on all the means of grace*. Other good books must not be read less, but the Scriptures more frequently and solemnly. Nothing must prevent us from repairing daily to our closets, where we must get down at the feet of our God, and agonize and wrestle till He grants us a greater measure of His Spirit's influences. While at our daily business we must form the habit of breathing forth, at intervals, ejaculatory prayer. Such petitions, with the quickness of thought, shoot beyond the stars and bring down grace to help in every time of need. On every Lord's-day, unless prevented by pressing necessity, go to the house of God, and while there, listen as for your life. In this way every service and sermon will strengthen in you the principles of grace. Suffer nothing to keep you from the meetings for prayer and church business, that would not keep you from the bed of a dying child. Such meetings, when regularly attended, will contribute to the formation of your religious character. Permit no sense of unworthiness to keep you from the stated communions. In the penitential recep-

tion of these simple emblems, there is obtained a sight of the sin-pardoning, soul-subduing cross, that is found nowhere else. When you associate with judicious Christian friends, unbosom to them your difficulties and temptations. Their advice and instructions, and the accordance of their experience with your own will greatly encourage you in the conflict after holiness and heaven. Keep on hand and read daily a portion of such books as Doddridge's *Rise and Progress*, Baxter's *Saints' Rest*, and James's *Christian Professor*. Such books, when attentively read, quicken the conscience, impress the heart, and inform the mind. Seek the companionship of the pious. Often put the questions to yourself, Am I answering the end of my creation? Am I carrying out the end of my redemption? Is the world receiving any benefit from my sojourn in it? Have seasons for deep, fixed meditation on God, His character, government kingdom, and on your obligations to Him. As though the judgment were to-morrow, guard against every sinful thought, word, and action. By anticipation, place yourself frequently before the judgment-seat of Christ, and go over the whole of that tremendous process. Let your thoughts often dart forward to those endless ages which will succeed that dread day. Cultivate the habit of seeing and adoring God in nature and in

providence, as well as in His word. Read His hand and acknowledge His goodness in the seasons, in the fruitful showers, in the refreshments of sleep, and the pleasure of friendship. Hold communion with God in common things. Let the rich gifts of nature remind you of their Giver. In this way the ordinary mercies, scenes, and events around you, will become mighty helps and incentives to religious growth. By thus attending to the means of grace, they will become channels of the grace of means to the soul.

CHAPTER VI.

MOTIVES TO HIGHER ATTAINMENTS IN PRACTICAL RELIGION.



HAVING seen the great cause of the slow progress of Christianity, and pointed out the prevalent defects of modern Christians ; having then ascertained the particulars in which our religion must appear in order to convince and convert the world, and then seen how such religion converts men to Christ ; and having next pointed out the means of reaching such a standard of piety, it now remains that we display some of the motives and considerations which should urge us to its cultivation ; and may the Holy Spirit aid the writer in the selection and enforcement of these motives.

The first consideration we mention is, that a thorough development of the religious principle *is the great end and purpose of God concernin*

His people. In the fall, the divine image was effaced from our souls. Now the great end that God has had in view in all that He has done in nature, providence, and grace, is to restore to us His lost image. At the cost of infinite pains and sacrifices, He has been seeking to erase from our souls the hideous likeness of Satan, and to beautify, ennoble, and save us, by impressing us again with His own forfeited image. Did He deliver up His Son to death for us? It was to remove, on His own part, the mighty obstacles in the way of making depraved man holy. Did He, on the grounds of Christ's mediation, send His Spirit into the world? It was to destroy in us the dominion of sin, and make us partakers of His holiness. Did He inspire prophets and apostles to write His Word? It was that that Word might be the great instrument of the Spirit in our sanctification. Were we from eternity chosen in Christ Jesus? It is "that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Did Jesus Christ give Himself for us? It was "that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." For what does God predestinate, call, and justify us? It is that we might "be conformed to the image of His Son." The Redeemer died, rose, ascended, and governs

the universe, that His people might be distinguished from mankind around them, and might differ from their former selves. That distinction and difference consist in true holiness. This too is the end of all the appliances of the church. Baptism symbolizes a death unto sin, and a resurrection unto newness of life. The design of preaching, the Lord's Supper, brotherly admonition, advice, and reproof, prayer, and the reading of the Scriptures, is not so much to make us happy as to make us holy. The church that is not growing in holiness comes short of the great end of its organization.

And what mean God's providences toward us? To some He gives health, pecuniary success, blesses them in a partner for life, in children, in servants, in relations, friends, and neighbours ; in all of which He is seeking to lead such to repentance. And what is repentance, but a heartfelt effort to abandon all sin and return to the favour and likeness of God? From others He takes away health, property, and friends, and in so doing He is promoting their profit, that they might be partakers of His holiness. Whether He sends prosperity or adversity, whether He gives or withholds, whether He realizes to us our brightest hopes or crushes them, it is to purify us and make us reflect

more brightly the principles of His grace. In fine, all that God has done for us in nature, providence, and grace, is but means to an end, and that end is that we may be holy.

But if the people of God are undistinguished from His enemies; if they are as vain, ambitious, covetous, selfish, and prayerless as the multitude who are professedly irreligious, then the stupendous scheme of redemption has been planned and wrought for them in vain. The divine truths of the gospel have been brought to bear on them to no practical purpose. The Spirit's wooings have produced in them no fruit. The question then comes home to every professor of God's religion, Shall Heaven do all this for me in vain? Shall I love and practice sin, when Jehovah has done so much to make me hate and forsake it? Shall He be so diligent to renew and transform me, and I remain idle in my sins? Has God loved me, Christ died for me, the Spirit striven with me, and angels watched over me in vain?

What is the true mission of life? Why, as redeemed sinners, are we in this world rather than not here? Why are we converted and left in this state of probation for thirty or forty years? Not to improve our farms, educate our children, and hoard up fortunes for them. Some rise higher, and make the study of the sciences

and mental improvement the chief aim of life. This, though noble and important, falls vastly short of the end for which we have been created and redeemed. Others rise higher, and become patriots and philanthropists ; but neither patriotism nor philanthropy constitutes the great work for which the Son of God ransomed His people from sin and hell. These are duties, but not the great duty of life. If nothing more than this is done we shall miss the great business of life, and frustrate the great designs of God in regard to us. Our chief mission on earth, compared with which everything else dwindles into perfect insignificance, is to become thoroughly religious. Jesus Christ occupies the throne of mediation, sends down the Spirit, and sends forth the ministry, that He may infuse in us and develop through us His own nature and Spirit. Never will He regard His work in us as accomplished, till, through our co-operation, we are made to resemble Him in righteousness and true holiness.

Ponder it well, Christian. The sublime end of your religion is not reached till your faith in Christ has transformed all your inner nature, and displayed itself to the world in your tempers, words, and actions. This is the prize for which you are a candidate, and it must be reached or you will do nothing to enlighten and impress

the world. It glitters before you. It is attainable. It is worth all things else. Possess it and you have heaven, whether you are in time or in eternity. Be fired then with the holy ambition of reaching it. Make it your chief and lifelong business to become a full-grown Christian. However repeatedly adverse influences may thwart you, hold on in one unbroken career of effort, and you will reach the high distinction of being a marked and influential disciple of Christ. While the world around us are coveting distinctions, let Christians, for whom there is a sure reward, be ambitious for distinction also in their vocation. While the learned are acquiring science after science, the honourable are increasing the splendour and distinction of their names, and the rich are adding possession to possession, let the child of grace, in God's strength, add knowledge to knowledge, grace to grace, till he shall have transcribed into his life the truth of God, and radiantly exhibited it before the world. In this way you will reach the end of life, and thereby regain more than you lost in Adam.

A higher grade of religion is called for, *to retrieve, as far as possible, the evil effects of our past inconsistency.* Lukewarm professors have done the cause of Christianity more harm than all the open enemies that have ever been arrayed against it. No one cause so mightily impedes

the spread of the gospel as the unholiness of its professed friends. No one thinks the less of religion, from what he sees in and hears from the avowedly irreligious. Who esteems Christianity any the less because Hume and Paine attempted to prove it an imposition? or because some wicked neighbour swears and desecrates the Sabbath? But far otherwise when professed Christians depart not from iniquity. Their inconsistencies make the unbelieving around them underestimate Christianity itself. Thousands have rejected and risen in judgment against the religion of the Bible, on account of the flagrant contradiction between the profession and the conduct of its friends.

Let the half-hearted, worldly professor, look over his life, and he will see an amount of harm done to the cause of Christ, and to the souls of men, sufficient to embitter the balance of life, and produce, if possible, anguish in heaven. He will see instances in which his lukewarmness has made some infidels, and hardened others in hopeless iniquity. The covetous and self-indulgent will see that they have caused the way of truth to be evil spoken of, and the name of Christ to be blasphemed. The hard-hearted and close-handed will see that they have kept many from embracing the gospel, and made them think that religion is a delusion. The malicious and unfor-

giving will see that their example has encouraged the wicked in their way to destruction. And the lover of the wine-cup will see that he has led others into sins from which he cannot now reclaim them.

It is a fearful truth, that unless our characters have been sufficiently religious to exert a positive influence for Christ, we have exerted an influence against Him. He who is not unmistakably religious is against Christ. There are no neutrals or moral blanks in the church of Christ. Every professor is a blessing or a bane. Every professed disciple, whether he designs it or not, is either swelling the tide that bears millions down to perdition, or he is drawing others after him in his heavenward march. How numerous the class who attempt to amalgamate the service of God and Mammon. They are not for carrying matters too far. They attempt to occupy middle ground between Christ and Satan ; but really Satan desires no better troops than this class. The prince of darkness is quite willing that such valuable allies should remain in the Church and retain the name of religion, as they thereby more effectually spread his empire ; and the Lord Jesus prefers open hostility to such pretended friends.

Here, then, arises a soul-moving motive to take sides with Christ, by being positively and strikingly religious. If the above position be

true, then what infinite harm are many modern professors doing the religion of Christ? How perfidiously have many misrepresented their Master, and how fatally have they misled the world! But the past cannot be recalled. We cannot roll the wheels of time backward, and undo the effects of our unfaithfulness. No tears nor reformation can counteract the trains of evil we have put in motion. But if there be in us the smallest degree of the Christian principle, let us seek to be cleansed from the guilt of our unholy influence, and arise to life and action. In God's might, let us "cease to do evil" by contradicting our profession, and "learn to do well" by adorning it.

Consistency requires the disciples of Christ to be thoroughly religious. Consistency is acting in harmony with one's self. Consistency requires honesty in a steward, fidelity in a servant, kindness in a friend, and gratitude to a benefactor. So soon as we know what a man professes to be, we at once determine what course of conduct becomes him. Now, when one professes the religion of Christ, he avows in the presence of heaven and earth the intention of living a new and a better life. This is the very meaning of a profession of religion. The very name Christian implies this. The vow to avoid all that God forbids and do all that He enjoins, was

recorded in heaven, and marked by the world. In declaring ourselves on the Lord's side, we proclaim that we are more, and intend to do more, than others; and the Church and the world expect that our lives will correspond with our profession. A profession followed by growth in grace is religious consistency. But when one professes faith in Christ, and is in life and conduct unlike Christ, he is, of all inconsistent beings, the most inconsistent.

However much we may deplore his conclusion, yet there is one encomium we must award to the intelligent infidel. He is consistent. He has examined the subject of Christianity, read the Bible, and weighed the arguments of our Butlers, Paleys, and Fullers, and come to the conclusion that the religion of Christ is an imposition, and acts accordingly. True, his is an awful, fatal consistency. There is another class who have a speculative faith in Christianity, and yet live and act as if it were a fable. To their other crimes they add the high crime of inconsistency. At the last day I would rather stand charged with speculative, than with practical atheism. He who admits the truth and importance of the religion of the Bible, and yet thinks, feels, and acts as if it were neither true nor important, is guilty of an inconsistency that all the flames of hell will never expiate.

But the lukewarm professor of religion is more inconsistent than the practical atheist. He sins against his convictions, his profession, his vows, and against Christ, and his brethren. In profession he has said that Christ is "All, and in All;" that till the day of his death he means to love Him more than mother, father, children, or life itself, and yet by his conduct, he often says, "I know not the man." In profession he has died to this world, and become the citizen of another country, and the subject of another kingdom; but in practice, he is as deeply engrossed in this world as those who professedly belong to it. Ceremonially, he is on the Lord's side; in reality he is on the side of Mammon. In precept he proclaims that the service of Christ is the soul's best portion, and at the same time affirms, by his conduct, that there is to be found something in the world more satisfactory. In practice, such a professor reverses the order and principles of his creed. The things which should be first are last; and those are last which should be first. In his heart and habits, the body has assumed the place of the soul, earth of heaven, time of eternity, and self of God.

Now of all moral nondescripts, of all marvellous solecisms, of all huge inconsistencies, such temporising professors are the greatest. They are the wonders of all creation. They build up

the cause of Christ with their mouths, and pull it down with their lives. They excite expectations to-day, but they disappoint them to-morrow. Now far better for all concerned that such had never named the name of Christ. In regard to the subject of religion, there are but two consistent characters. One is the downright infidel, and the other is the unmistakable, thorough, evangelical Christian. Every intermediate character is a hideous anomaly. We call then, on every friend of Christ, to rise up to the high distinction of Christian consistency. Christian brother! Jesus Christ sacrificed heaven and himself for you. Consistency demands that you should zealously serve such a friend. Heaven and earth, good men and bad men, expect to see you entirely devoted to your Redeemer. Anything short of flaming zeal in the cause and kingdom of such a Saviour, is as unreasonable as it is frustrating to the end of your redemption. Sin is the greatest foe of God and man; it crucified the Son of God; casts into the dust the sacred honour of Jehovah; kindles the flames of hell, and sinks the soul into endless perdition; and if so, does not consistency require us to watch, strive, pray, and repent till we shall have abandoned all sin? If there be a hell, what else in the universe is more consistent than ceaseless diligence to escape it? If there be a heaven,

and if without holiness no one can be admitted into that pure world, what else is so legitimate, so becoming to a redeemed sinner, as constant, self-denying, vigorous efforts to acquire that holiness? If the honour of Christ, for the vindication of which ten legions of angels would dart down from their thrones, has been committed to the Churches, is not that Christian a traitor to his high trust who does not supremely and avowedly live and labour for its promotion? If there is a sense in which the salvation of the unconverted around us depends upon our agency, then what do we in this world unless we are by our prayers, exertions, and example, seeking to bring them to Christ? In sum, then, we see consistency in the infidel—soul-ruining consistency true it is. In the whole-hearted Christian we see the jewel of soul-saving consistency; but in every intermediate class there is a madness that astonishes all worlds. What a plea then is this for a radical reformation in our religion!

Another mighty motive that should induce us to make higher attainments in practical religion, *is our usefulness to others*. Both the Scriptures and experience shew that our usefulness in the world is just in proportion to the grade of our piety. The mightiest means of moral influence is not wealth, or talents, or high social position,

but a high standard of personal religion. This will as necessarily tell on those around us, as the mid-day sun diffuses over the earth light and heat. Effect will not more certainly follow its adequate cause, than will the man, who is manifestly the *subject* of God's grace, become the *medium* of that grace to others. Christians who "are manifestly the epistles of Christ, known and read of all men," are the salt of the earth and the light of the world, in more senses than one.

Take one such as the type of his class, and study his history through the world, and you will find that in all his multiform relations and conditions, he is in the highest sense a blessing. *View him as a citizen.* He, and such as he, are the hope of this kingdom, more than our army, territory, or boasted form of government. The secret of our prosperity and perpetuity as a nation, is not our excellent constitution and model institutions, but the conservative influence of the tens of thousands of Christians that are scattered over the land. Their example restrains the influences that would otherwise rend this great nation into fragments. Their prayers prop the avenging skies. They stand in the breach, and hold back the impending judgments of an angry God. *View him as a*

neighbour. He may be railed at and scorned. The old may call him a bigot, and the young may jeer him. Still his example will check vice and promote righteousness. By his prayers he wards off from the guilty their merited doom. The wicked around owe him a debt of obligation that they cannot estimate. No greater calamity could befall such a community than the removal of this God-fearing man from it. He is to those with whom he mingles a living, unanswerable argument for the truth of Christianity. He silently rolls off reproach from the religion of Christ, and where he does not win to it men's hearts, he gains the suffrage of their judgments and consciences. He restrains the vicious, convinces the gainsayers, encourages the good, and gradually produces moral renovation all around him. *Follow him into his family.* Here transpire, daily, scenes that angels linger to behold. By exemplifying before his household whatsoever things that are true, whatsoever things that are just, whatsoever things that are honest, whatsoever things that are pure, whatsoever things that are lovely, whatsoever things that are of good report, by daily loading his charge to the family altar, by maintaining order and harmony without violence or severity, by mingling cheerfulness with devoutness; in

fine, by giving his precepts the force of a consistent example, he will, with a moral certainty, train his children for the nation, the church, and for heaven. *View him as a member of the Church.* One spiritual, whole-hearted Christian in a church is often more useful than a hundred ordinary professors. By the weight of his character, by his punctuality and liberality, by his love for the brethren, by his circumspect walk, by his labours and self-denials, he succours the tempted, strengthens the weak, confirms the wavering, reproves the careless, and provokes the lukewarm to good works. With a church of such members, a pastor may storm Satan's seat. Every minister who understands his Master's work would rather be the pastor of ten such members than of a hundred wealthy, self-indulgent members, who have a name to live while they are dead. Such a Christian will be missed by the church when he dies. *View him amid wrongs and persecutions.* To the fretful, uncharitable, and unforgiving he is kind, calm, and meek. While the storms of furious passions are raging in the bosoms of those around him, he is tranquil and serene. In this way he puts to silence ignorant and foolish men, and wins those without. *Behold him under losses and disappointments.* His resignation and patience mightily convince the beholder of the sustaining

power of Christianity. Nor does his usefulness cease when he is sick and bedridden. We often misjudge, and suppose that when the child of grace is laid aside from his labours, the period of his usefulness has closed, when really, by his patience and calmness under his suffering, he often does more good than he did when he exerted himself openly and actively. The true Christian is never laid by. The influence that goes from him while languishing, is often greater than when in the fulness of health he took the lead in each benevolent enterprise. It is on sick-beds, and in the near prospect of death, that the sustaining power of Christianity is most strikingly displayed. Nor does the usefulness of the Bible Christian terminate with his life. After the grave has covered his form, "he being dead yet speaketh." His memory admonishes and encourages more powerfully than even his living example.

Would you then, upon the broadest possible scale, do good ; would you pass your days in the most useful manner, give the church and your generation the greatest reason to bless God for your existence ; then determine, in God's strength, that you will be a New Testament Christian. In no other way can you be a blessing to the world.

Another consideration, urging to the attain-

ment of elevated religion is, *its moral beauty and attractiveness*. True believers may be unsung by poets, and unpraised by orators ; by worldlings they may be despised, and by witlings held in contempt ; still, nothing invests the human character with such moral dignity and loveliness as the religion of Christ. It is not great talents, nor learning, nor splendid martial and civil achievements, that impart true honour to man. To stand high in the estimation of the moral universe, is to be regenerated and transformed by the Spirit of God. The only way to twine around your brow undying laurels, is to copy the example of Jesus Christ. He only is great who is scripturally religious. Were men not blinded by sin they would see in Christ-like piety overpowering charms. It is supremely lovely in all. It decorates age and decrepitude. It is exquisitely attractive when displayed by youth. It adds to their every natural accomplishment, gives a lustre to their every excellence, and a charm to their every grace. This side of heaven there is nothing so lovely as a consistently religious youth. We admire the beauties of nature. The older we grow, the more are we enchanted by the rainbow. We gaze with delight on the wonders of art ; but God is our witness, we would go further to see the godly youth, to hear him tell of his hope in Christ, than we

would to behold the grandest productions of nature and art.

In the hour of conversion the formation of the Christian's character commences. The image of God is then enstamped on his soul, and shines out in progressive beauty. In his life the loveliness of Christ is more and more manifested, till it matures into a beauteous diadem for his brow, and invests his whole character with a halo of glory. His exterior may be unlovely ; he may be unrefined, without wealth and learning. He may live in some rude hut, unknowing and unknown ; still, angels are his companions and life-guards. Gabriel would leave his throne and pass by palaces and halls, to lift the cup to his thirsting lips. Ten thousand of these holy and mighty beings watch over him, sympathise with him, and rejoice over him, as a valuable addition to God's great kingdom of virtue. True, he may not be allied to any of the great of earth, but he has God for his Father, Jesus Christ for his elder Brother, and the Holy Ghost for his Sanctifier. He is a prince in disguise. His name may not be on the page of worldly fame, but it is recorded in the Lamb's book of life. He may die unwept and unsung, yet over his dying couch waves the white banner of the Prince of life. His death is precious in the sight of the Lord ; and then at the judgment-seat of Christ, when

scholars, poets, statesmen, and warriors, shall be overlooked, he will be singled out and crowned in the presence of the universe, and in heaven occupy a throne above the angels.

How do all the glory of Greece and Rome, all the 'honours of earth's battle-fields, and earth's titles, pale before the brighter glory and honour of being a New Testament Christian? Give me the high honour of wearing Christ's name, and what care I for the world's pre-eminence? Living or dead, I can say, "Carve me not a line, raise not a stone, but leave *me alone with my glory*." Striking, growing, Christ-like religion is more lovely than anything else known to men or angels. Is it attractive and pleasing to watch the magnificent building as it gradually rises from its foundation into completion? How infinitely delightful then, to all good beings, to see the penitent sinner first lay the foundation of faith in Christ, and then add grace to grace, excellency to excellency, till he forms the super-structure of practical godliness! Is it charming to see in your garden, first the signs of vegetable life, then the expanding foliage, anon the opening bud, and then the swelling, ripening fruit? Then how morally sublime to behold the trees of God's right hand's planting, bearing first the bud and blossom of profession, and then the rippling, clustering fruits of the Spirit! To

others besides the doting parents, it is deeply interesting to mark the development and growth of the physical and mental powers of the healthy infant : to see its tender limbs maturing, its reason dawning, acquiring by degrees the art of walking and talking, and gradually reaching manhood. So to God and all good beings, it is lovely to witness a new-born babe in Christ first yield obedience to Christ's positive commands, then acquiring clearer views of truth and duty, now overcoming and correcting a sinful habit, anon resisting Satan's fiery darts ; further on, becoming meeker, and more patient and resigned, amid wrongs and losses ; then coming out of a fiery trial with his faith strengthened, his love inflamed, and his deadness to the world increased ; and thus on, till he attains to spiritual manhood. Such a sight is more pleasing to God than anything else that transpires in His universe. It is entertaining to watch a master artist sketch the rude outline of a friend's picture, and then by adding shade after shade, feature after feature, make that friend stand out on the canvas in life-like appearance. So what is more admirable than to behold the disciple of Christ continuing to think of, commune with, pray to, and follow after, his great Model ; copying into his life and character, trait after trait of his Saviour, until he "is changed into the same

image, even as by the Spirit of the Lord?" Such a sight rivets the admiring gaze of all heaven. We have seen the dark clouds gather around the morning sun as if to extinguish his beams, and fogs condense themselves as though they would shroud the earth from his influence ; but we have watched the orb of day as he rode up the skies, scattering the gloomy clouds, and after having diffused life over the earth, go down in floods of molten light. This was sublime and beautiful ; but far less so than the career of that Christian who, by faith, first turns to Christ the Sun of righteousness, and catches His brightness, and then on through life lets shine steadily that light in a consistent example, till it goes down in the West of a triumphant death, to rise again in the undying splendour of the everlasting East. We record the deeds, sing the praises, and embalm the memories of earth's great conquerors ; but what in point of brilliancy and usefulness are the victories of an Alexander, a Napoleon, or a Wellington, compared with the Christian's conquest, who overcomes Satan with his hosts, the world with its blandishments, and the flesh with its lusts ?

Who in point of excellence can be compared with the Christian ? The rich ? But the believer owns all things. The honourable ? The child

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of grace has the honour that comes from God. The learned? The believer is wise unto salvation. God himself pronounces such more excellent than his neighbour, however distinguished that neighbour may be. Nay, he stands higher than Adam stood before his fall.

Would you then, Christian brother, occupy this high grade in the scale of being? would you have a character that will win the admiration of all classes and all worlds? would you on earth be the highest style of man, and stand high at the great judgment-day? Then, in reliance on God's Spirit, see to it that you believe in Christ more strongly, love Him more ardently, and copy His example more closely. No higher encomium can be paid a human being; there is no higher standard for any of God's creatures to reach; no nobler epitaph can be inscribed upon the tomb of any, than that he was a Bible Christian.

“Who would not be a Christian? I have seen
Men shrinking from the term, as if it brought
A charge against them. Yet the honour'd name
Is full of gentlest meaning; odours rise
And beauty floats around it.
Hark! 'tis the loftiest name the language bears,
And all the languages in all the worlds
Have none so sublime. It relates to Christ,
And breathes of God and holiness,
By the rich graces of the Holy Ghost,

To fit them for the Paradise on high,
Where angels dwell and perfect manhood shines
In the clear lustre of redeeming love
For ever and for ever; and implies
A son and heir of the eternal God."

Another argument for a higher degree of personal religion is, *that it will promote a higher degree of happiness.* Says Bacon, "Sin and sorrow are bound together by adamant chains." God himself cannot break this connexion. Hence man increases in misery as he increases in sin. It is upon this principle that the devil is the most miserable being in the universe, because he is the most depraved.

So, on the other hand, there is an inseparable connexion between holiness and happiness. God is the most happy being in the universe, because He is the most holy; and the happiness of His people, the world over, is just in proportion as they resemble Him in righteousness and true holiness. Heaven is a world of supreme happiness, because it is a world of supreme holiness; and hell is a world of supreme misery, because sin is there fully developed. God has so ordered it, that our comfort and well-being in this world can only be found in His service. For the last six thousand years mankind have been happiness-hunters. In all ages and lands the eager query has been, "Who will shew us any good?" But every device has been a failure. The

recorded and unrecorded experience of all has been, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." We can no more expect to find happiness in the pursuits and objects of this world than we may expect to find

"Mellow grapes beneath the icy pole ;
Blooming roses on the cheek of death ; or
Substance in a world of unsubstantial shades."

But in the likeness and service of Christ is found a happiness, pure, elevating, perennial, inexhaustible ; a happiness that will go with us in all conditions, all lands, and all worlds.

Why then, if Christianity in document is adapted to impart to its friends such peace, are there so many professors disquieted in spirit—harassed by misgivings and fears? They who ought to be the happiest people out of heaven seem in some instances to be the most depressed and gloomy ; and what should be added in this connexion is, that this unhappiness in professed Christians not only unfits them for extensive usefulness, but gives religion a repulsive aspect to those without. Since, then, unhappiness is so prevalent among the avowed friends of Christ, and since this want of happiness has such a detrimental effect on them and the irreligious, why, it is most seasonable to ask, do such Christians find so little pleasure in religion? Surely in this matter they are not straitened in God.

What more could He have done and said than He has done and said, to give His people occasion and grounds for joy? The truth plainly told is, that after making some allowance for the influence of morbid temperaments, the great cause of all this sadness and depression in the churches of Christ is the small degree of their religion. The only reason why they are disconsolate is because they "follow the Lord afar off." An old writer has said, "A little religion will make one miserable, and much will make one very happy." One single uncrucified, unbemoaned sin will not only destroy all religious enjoyment, but open the soul to the devil, with his whole black train of guilt and misery. "This little hand," (said Whitefield, placing his hand near his eyes, while preaching in an open field,) "will hide the lustre of the sun from my eyes; so one small sin will shut out from the soul the life-giving beams of the Sun of righteousness, and leave it involved in darkness." It matters not what this sin is. Any one sin habitually indulged in, whether it be pride, malice, backbiting, covetousness, filling the mind with unholy images, or murmuring under adverse providences, will exclude from the soul all religious enjoyment. As well expect the sun's rays in a dark day, as to hope for the consolations of Christ without purposing and striving against all sin, and aiming in all our views,

feelings, and actions to please God. In whose heart will God be more likely to shed abroad His soul-refreshing love than in the heart of the man who follows Him most fully? Whose mornings will be bright, noons calm, and evenings serene, if not the man's whose daily aim is to bring his inner and outer life to accord with God's will? After all, the great secret of being happy is to be holy. He who grows in practical religion, has opened within and without a thousand sources of true bliss. The joy arising from harmony between the passions and the conscience—the joy arising from victory over inward and outward foes—the joy arising from new views of divine truth—the joy arising from usefulness—the joy arising from communion with God—the joy arising from the approbation of God—the joy arising from the Spirit's gracious influences—the joy arising from the study of nature, providence, and the Scriptures—and the joy arising from a well-grounded hope of heaven, all belong to the man who "grows in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The golden fruit of happiness grows only on the tree of holiness. If happiness is sought in any other way than by being holy, it is sought in vain. We owe it to ourselves, to the world around us, and the honour of Christ, to rejoice in the Lord. But the only way to rejoice in the

Lord is to be like the Lord. Joy springing from any other source is a delusion.

To all the sad and gloomy professors of Christ's religion, then, we would say, Would you have spring up in your soul the joy of the Lord? Would you have all within become peace, and all before you become transport? Would you have God the Father smile on you in the fulness of His forgiving love, God the Son take up His abode with you and become precious to you, and God the Spirit descend upon you with His comforting and dove-like influences? Would you be enabled to look forward to the judgment-throne and see no terror there? and would you sing a cheerful song in the house of your pilgrimage? Then determine that you will attain to more than customary religion; forget the things that are behind, and press toward the measure of the stature of a perfect Christian. Fast, pray, read, strive, and watch, till the image of Christ is impressed more deeply on your soul, and shines more brightly in your life; then, and not till then, will you "have a heaven begun below."

Another argument for a higher standard of religion among our churches is, that *such a standard is the best proof of a gracious state*. Deception in religious concerns is as common as it is ruinous. Perhaps never in any age, since the days of inspiration, were there more

deceived in their hopes for eternity, than there are in this age. Let any one observe the wide discrepancy between the Christian character, as it is drawn in the Scriptures, and as it appears in actual life, and he will be convinced of the truth of this statement. What says Christ? "*Many* shall come unto Me in that day, and shall say, Lord ! Lord ! and I will profess unto them, I never knew you." In the light of God's Scriptures we are forced to the conclusion that very many bearing the name of Christ are going down to the grave "with a lie in their right hand," and instead of meeting, as they expect, the smiles of angels, and the plaudits of the Redeemer, will hear the thunders of wrath and the wailings of the lost.

Are there, then, on this side of the grave, attainable, infallible evidences of our adoption into the divine family and heirship to heaven? There are. We need not die and go all the way to the judgment-seat to find out whether we are in a saved state. We may as certainly test our religious characters, and know what will be our condition in eternity, as if we heard our doom from the lips of the final Judge. What are these unmistakable marks of salvation? There are many ; but there is one, more to be depended on than all others, and without which all others are delusive. On it our Lord and His apostles

laid great stress. What is it? Not that we have had high-wrought and joyful feelings. Not that we are sound in the faith, and have "kept the ordinances as they were delivered unto us." Judas, Demas, and Alexander were baptized. Not in zeal and in the pronounciation of party shibboleths. All these may, or they may not be, tests of a saved state. These are too easy and common to be distinguishing. In many instances they are counterfeited. But the evidence in question is unerring. To possess it, is to be a Christian, as certainly as the Bible is the word of God. This proof is heartfelt, filial, and impartial obedience to the will of God. Not more certainly does a pure stream prove the existence of a pure fountain, and good fruit the goodness of the tree, than does a striking religious life prove the existence of the religious principle. From other causes than a divine influence one may have joy. From fifty other motives, besides the love and glory of God, one may be moral in the worldly aspects of his character. Other considerations than a spirit of obedience may induce one to profess Christianity. But nothing in the universe, but God's grace as its principle, and God's glory as its motive, can induce one to live a holy life. Light and heat, in the natural world, do not more clearly prove the existence of the sun, than does Christ-like

holiness, in the life, prove the genuineness of our faith in Christ. To the great question then, Who are New Testament Christians? we reply, Only those who resemble Christ in their lives and characters.

The great reason why so many professors walk in darkness and are oppressed with doubts, is not because they have ill health and morbid temperaments, but because of the low type of their religion. A small degree of religion, whether in ourselves or others, is scarcely perceptible. To be discernible, it must be vigorous in principle and in life. Hence all other evidences of a state of grace are fallacious if they are unaccompanied by personal holiness. If from month to month, and from year to year, there be no improvement in the Christian life, then must our case be dark and doubtful. Whatever zeal we may display in defending our creed; however well we may converse upon religious subjects; no matter how much we may enjoy ourselves under preaching and in religious conversation; whatever bright discoveries we may have had concerning Christ; however confident we may be of our acceptance with God,—if still our hearts are set on gain; if we are engrossed in the world; are aspiring after its honours; are proud, discontented, revengeful, slothful, sensual, unfeeling, vain of our attainments, un-

charitable in our estimate of others ; if we refuse to give of our substance to the cause of Christ, or give leanly and grudgingly, then have we "a name to live while we are dead." Or, if we have any religion at all, it is but a spark buried under the ashes of our idle altars.

Still more doubtful is our case if, instead of advancing in holiness, we decline. Christians may be overtaken and fall into great sins. Thus did David and Peter. This is dreadful ; but when followed by repentance, such falls are less unfavourable than that regular declension which admits of no intervenings of warmth. Pleurisy and pneumonia may kill ; certainly they greatly alarm and endanger life ; but often they soon pass away and give place to returning health. Whereas consumption, though its attacks are gentle, gradual, and unperceivable, always ends in death. Now I will not say that the hectic in religion is hopeless ; but it must be allowed on all hands that the chances are fearfully against him. Remaining stationary, and still more, declining in religion, is a melancholy proof that we are not religious. On the other hand, regular progress in the various graces is, in the estimation of God, of others, and of ourselves, the best testimony of Christian character. Our evidences of grace are just in proportion to our growth in grace.

Would you then, disciple of Christ, answer affirmatively the great question, "Am I a Christian?" Would you have an evidence of your religious state that will displace every doubt? Would you have a proof that is scriptural, satisfactory, and reasonable—one that will stand the test of examination, the test of affliction and death, and the severer test of the great day of judgment? Then with the Bible in your hand, the world around you, and eternity before you, seek to correct all in you that is wrong, and confirm all that is right. Aim every day to copy more closely the example of Christ; to make more and more apparent and attractive His image in your life and character. Let it be your chief work, under the sun, to bring all your feelings, sentiments, habits, and plans, under the control of the religious principle. Make Christianity the great business-guide and ornament of your life. Strive, read, watch, hear, restrain, and pray, till it mingles with and sanctifies all your secular affairs; sheds its pure and celestial tints over the whole of your character, leaving nothing about you unirradiated with its beams.

Living thus, the Father and the Son will take up their abode with you; the Spirit will bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God; you will, from your own experience, know

that the gospel is from God, and that you are savingly interested in it, and your religion will become to you, and to others, a self-evidencing reality, causing you to exclaim, in view of death and eternity, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." And your neighbours, from beholding you, will exclaim, Let us live the life and die the death of the righteous.

A high grade of personal religion *is the most suitable and acceptable return we can make to Christ for what He has done for us.* Christian! how much owest thou thy Lord? Explore the archives of antiquity, drain the historic page, take the wings of an angel and fly to distant worlds, and you can find no love and kindness like that which Jesus Christ has displayed toward you. Unasked, unsolicited, without respect to your merits or desires, He came into the world and placed himself in the very gap between you and ruin. For you He exchanged the honours and bliss of the great white throne for the humiliations of Bethlehem, and the agonies of Gethsemane and Golgotha. He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich—how rich you can never know in this world. In the gloomy garden He drank, at the hands of His Father, the wrath-cup which would have

been pressed to your lips through eternity. On the cross He died a death of which it is fearful even to read, that you might not die that second death that never dies. In sum, look backward, and think what He has done for you ; look upward, and think what He is now doing for you ; and look forward, and think what He will do for you. Your pardon, your justification, your reconciliation to God ; your peace of mind, your hope of heaven, your triumph in death, your admission into Paradise, your glorious resurrection, your being crowned at the great day, and your occupying a throne in heaven, have all been secured to you by the death and intercession of Jesus Christ. Oh, if in the universe there be such a thing as obligation, then are the redeemed under the most soul-moving obligation to the Redeemer ! Christian brother ! in the hour of your conversion, when you dropped the dreadful calculation of endless sorrow, and cherished for the first time the hope of heaven, you asked, and are still asking, “ Lord, what wilt thou have me do ? ” “ What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits ? ” How shall I make some returns to Him ?

You owe it to Him to love Him more than father, mother, wife, children, or life itself. The dearest earthly friend should give place to Him in your heart. You owe it to Him to repose in

Him an implicit, trustful, penitential, life-long faith. The highest gratitude that ever throbbed in the most affected heart you should constantly cherish toward Him. Praise as sweet as the breath of love, and loud as the echo of His fame, you should offer Him. You owe it to Him to speak of Him and exert yourself to promote His cause. But all this, though acceptable, is not the most acceptable offering you can make. The most approved offering you can make Him is holiness of life. Thanksliving is far more pleasing in His sight than thanksgiving. Without holiness no man can please Christ. Your service, in every other respect, will be unacceptable to Him so long as you crucify Him afresh with one habitual sin. Your faith and hope are spurious, so long as you hurl at His heart the spear of unbemoaned lusts. The love that He approves is that which leads you to keep His commandments. The faith that pleases and honours Him is that vital principle that sanctifies the heart and character. The gratitude that He values is not that which exhausts itself in intense feelings, but that operative emotion that prompts us to be "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," as He was. The baptism that He accepts is that which symbolizes a death unto sin, and a resurrection unto newness of life. The prayers that He hears and answers

are petitions for grace to resist sin and follow after holiness.

We would not be misunderstood. We would not make holiness take the place of Christ's death. That were to subvert the whole gospel, offend God, and make our perdition sure; but holiness, as the development of our faith in the atoning cross, is an indispensable part of gospel salvation, and is infinitely pleasing and honouring to Christ, because in the sanctification of His people He achieves the great end for which He died. In the economy of our redemption has He not inseparably joined together justification and sanctification? And is not the latter just as essential to our admission into heaven as the former? The truth is, no doctrine is in this age so unpopular and so much overlooked as the subject of holiness. How few books and sermons urge it with any prominence! Writers and preachers are sensitive lest, in the world's estimation, they put forth a legal gospel. Now in this particular we must return to the first principles of the gospel. Shall we cease to proclaim and practise it because Papists and legalists have perverted it from its scriptural connexion? Was not holiness a great theme of Christ's ministry? How constantly and fully do the apostles urge it in their epistles! And is it not upon one page of God's book, in letters of living

light, written, "*Without holiness no man shall see the Lord?*" This is one of the great unbending laws of Christ's religion, peculiar to no land or age; but everywhere, in all lands and ages, for the city and the country, for the refined and the rude, for the ministry and the laity, it demands, as an indispensable condition of Christian discipleship, that there be an abandonment of all sin, and a striving after universal and perpetual holiness.

Would you then have a religion after the mind and model of Christ? Would you give a proof of the genuineness of your love and faith, that both God and men demand of you? Would you attain the great end Christ had in dying for you? Nay, would you give joy to the heart that bled for you on the cross? Then seek to be in reality and in appearance more scripturally religious.

Another plea which must tell is, *that most men form their opinions of Christianity itself from what they see in the spirit and conduct of its professors.* But few irreligious persons study and form their views of Christ's religion as it is revealed in the Scriptures and exemplified in its Author. To the busy, faithless world, the Bible is an antiquated, repulsive abstraction. Thousands never read it. Others read it to cavil. After all, mankind are but little impressed with

the fact that Jesus Christ died and arose again, and commanded the apostles to preach the gospel to every creature. They never investigate, and consequently are not convinced by the mighty array of evidence that attests the truth of Christianity. But the mass of mankind do canvass Christianity as it appears in the life of its friends. The life and conduct of Christ's disciples is an epistle "known and read of all men." Every Christian's life is a volume read and studied through and through. Most men care not for the apparent discrepancies in the Scriptures, but every discrepancy in the example of the Christian, every blot and blur, every real and apparent contradiction in the living epistles, is by them scrutinized with the deepest interest.

From different motives different classes read and scan Christians. Though in so doing they act on a principle they repudiate in everything else, one class persist in judging Christ and His religion by Christians, and not Christians by Christ and the Scriptures. With a shrewdness sharpened by enmity, they eagerly watch the tempers and conduct of Christians, not to remove but to confirm their prejudices. Though steeped to the lips themselves in profligacy, whenever they detect some minor fault in the friends of Christ, they exultingly proclaim that such are fallen from grace. Now woe to this class if pro-

fessors of religion continue to give them occasions to stumble. On account of the imperfections of Christ's friends they will reject Christ himself, and inherit the death they seek. Another class mark and study your temper and conduct from feelings of curiosity. Others observe you that they may detect your inconsistencies, and thereby justify and confirm their infidelity. But from far different motives do most of the impenitent read your life. Some are honestly halting, whether to embrace Christianity, from a secret scepticism. They watch you that they may hear something from you, and see something in you, that will remove their difficulties, and decide them for Christ. Accordingly, they will incline to the side of infidelity or to the side of Christ, as the conduct of Christians impresses them favourably or unfavourably. In settling the great question, whether Christianity is true or an imposition, the only standard they will accept and appeal to is the consistent life of Christians. Thousands of sceptics and semi-sceptics are saying to the churches, Give us example as well as precept—a holy life as well as a sound creed ; let us behold your religion transform your every-day life and character, and we will at once embrace your Master and espouse His cause. And then what a number of persons, more or less awakened, look alone to the professors of religion around

them for instruction and encouragement. Many a young convert, in determining whether he has been converted, not only appeals to the experience of some older Christian, but takes his manner of life for his model. The unbelieving husband will be convinced of the truth of Christianity, not so much from what he reads and hears: he forms his views of religion from the temper and conduct of his professing wife. The child forms its views of religion, not so much from what it hears in the pulpit or in the Sabbath-school, as from the temper and demeanour it sees in its parents. The only representative that Christianity has in many a neighbourhood is a small church. In other communities there are only a few of Christ's friends. The appreciation in which such communities hold Christianity, will be just in proportion as such Christians evince the spirit of Christ in their walk and conversation. In many a family the only exponent and witness of Christ and His religion is a wife, daughter, or servant. Such families will take their type of belief, or disbelief, in religion, from the manifestations of it they behold in these professors.

What mighty interests, then, depend on the manner in which Christians demean themselves! No other beings in any other world are the depositories of such a vital trust. Every step the

Christian takes is pregnant with results that take hold on eternity. He is shut up to the alternative of blessing the world by his faithfulness, or blasting it by his inconsistency.

In this item, then, here is the sum of our plea for a higher grade of religion. If those around us will be made the friends or foes of Christ, according as our representations of Him are accurate or inaccurate; if our being unlike Christ will make men think lightly of Him, and if on the other hand, the more closely we imitate Him, the more highly will they esteem Him; if on the one hand by violating our profession we make infidels and repel them from Christ, and on the other by adorning it, we most effectually convince and win them to Christ, then "what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" Disciples of Christ! the most important of all interests are committed to you. Do not by your lukewarmness betray them. Be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the common affairs of life, and you will bear for the truth a more eloquent testimony than those who went to the martyr's stake. "The world will then take knowledge of you that you have been with Christ."

Regard for God's glory requires us to be eminently religious. Nothing that good men and

angels are, or can do, can add one gleam to God's essential glory ; nor can the depravity of bad men and angels diminish it. But it is otherwise with God's *declarative* or *manifestative* glory. This, wicked men can hinder and tarnish ; and righteous men can maintain and promote. In this sense, believers, throughout the Scriptures, are required to glorify God. What mean such commands as these? "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, *and glorify your Father* which is in heaven." "For ye are bought with a price ; *therefore glorify God* in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, *unto the glory and praise of God.*"

All God's works glorify Him ; but the blazing of a thousand suns reflect not so brightly His honour, as the transformation of one sinner from sin to holiness. One instance of sound conversion, and progressive sanctification, secures to God's name a richer revenue of praise than all that shines above and blooms beneath. On such a mind the image of God is enstamped ; in such a life the beauty of God shines ; and in such a character the loveliness of God is begun. The creation of worlds and the revolution of empires are trifling displays of God's power and glory, compared with the deliverance of one im-

mortal soul from the ruins of the fall. Henceforth he becomes a specimen of redeeming grace; a valuable accession to the great kingdom of love; an efficient medium of salvation to the lost; a loud proclaimer of God's praise; a beautiful vessel of God's mercy; an illustrious trophy of the Redeemer's cross; and a bright gem in His mediatorial crown.

But to attain the high privilege of thus honouring Christ, it is not enough that we be regenerated. In addition to this, we must "go on unto perfection." In religion we do not glorify Christ so much by what we believe, profess, and say, as by what we are, and appear to be. Says Christ, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." We must abound in the fruits of the Spirit, in order to raise our Redeemer in the esteem of the world. The more brightly the sun shines, the more strikingly does it declare the glory of God; so the more elevated and obvious our religion is, the more honour do we bring to Christ.

To Christians, in a peculiar sense, is committed the vindication and completion of Christ's honour in this revolted world. If faithful to this highest of all trusts, all heaven will exult, and souls around us will be saved. But if by our unholiness we betray the honour of our ascended Lord, then will there be triumph in

the ranks of darkness, and the salvation of the world be mightily hindered. Compared with the honour of the Saviour, everything else is lighter than vanity. Nothing else is so sacred and precious. Ten thousand eager angels would at the least signal rush down from their thrones for its vindication. The Christian who does not cherish a holy jealousy for his Lord, who does not mourn when his Master is dishonoured, and rejoice when He is exalted, is not worthy of his name.

What a motive this for us to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things! We can neither preach nor write away the reproach that has been cast on Christ's name and cause. The only way to do it is to exhibit steadily and brightly a religious example. Let this most mighty of all weapons, then, be wielded for Him. Hundreds are questioning His divine character and power. Let us, both by precept and example, make a bold stand for Him against such contemners. All around us are infidels in theory, and more in practice, who are casting upon His adorable character the imputation of falsehood, casting His sacred honour in the dust; nay, labouring in mad enmity to extinguish the last ray of His glory from the earth. Let us oppose such a heresy with high-toned personal religion, and such infidels will at once encounter an ar-

gument they cannot answer, and a rebuke they cannot withstand. In this way the saints of all classes may become champions of Heaven's insulted honour. Many profess Christ's name, and then by their daily conduct say, "We know not the man." Of all classes they wound Christ most deeply. Their lives tend to prove Jesus to be an impostor, and His religion an imposition. Let us so imbibe and display the spirit of Christ, that the testimony of such traitors shall be rebutted and neutralised. Despite of such betrayers, let the majority of Christ's friends live for Him, and the world will be speedily converted. Another class defame the divine government, impeach God's wisdom, impugn His goodness, and complain and repine under adverse providences. Let the friends of God roll off this reproach by displaying before such an example of patience, submission, and cheerfulness, under all the losses, trials, and crosses with which they may be visited. Others are enemies to God by wicked works. They blaspheme His name, profane His Sabbaths, condemn His Word, vilify His people, and heap contempt on His ordinances. Such glory in dishonouring the God of heaven. They array themselves under the black banners of Apollyon, and hurl defiance at their Maker. There is a way to disarm these enemies of their

hostility to the divine throne ; and that is to reflect before them the spirit and image of Christ in our life. The secret of conquering such foes for our King is to imitate that King in our manner of living. But most deeply and tenderly do men dishonour God by rejecting His only-begotten Son. No other insult equals this. This is to pour contempt on His character and throne. No other wrong from puny man is so unprovoked, and so frustrating to the designs and glory of God. Now, whole-hearted Christians have it in their power to do much towards overcoming this great sin. In no other way can we so effectually convince men of the guilt of unbelief, and induce them to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, as by shewing them our faith by our works. Faith embodied is the most powerful refutation of scepticism, and the most irresistible plea for embracing the world's Redeemer. So that if we would honour our God and Saviour upon the broadest possible scale, do more to recover to Him the glory of which the fall defrauded Him than the shining of all the suns, and the shouting of all the angels ; then we must make it our chief business on earth to conform our lives to Christ, our Pattern and Exemplar, as well as to trust Him as our atoning sacrifice.

A high standard of personal religion has a

most intimate and happy bearing on our manner of dying. Nothing is more desirable than that we should die calmly and triumphantly. Such a death greatly honours God, convinces the unbeliever more effectually than sermons, is peculiarly encouraging to other Christians, and is an unutterable joy to the dying saint himself. Such a departure out of time into eternity, is a mighty, tangible illustration of the truth and importance of Christianity, useful to others, and "precious in the sight of the Lord." Such Christians as Payson, Boardman, Carey, Perthes, and Havelock, did much for the cause of Christ by their manner of living ; but it may be well questioned whether they did not do more for that cause by their manner of dying. An entrance into the kingdom above, like that of Payson's, so radiant, so glorious, so triumphant, will tell for the honour of Christ and His religion, through all time. What are all the honours, the riches, and pleasures of earth, compared with such an end ! Who would not part with all the gold of earth's mines, all the pearls of earth's seas, and all the crowns of earth's kingdoms, to die such a death ? Such a death the apostle Paul desired more than the continuance of life. His great concern was "to finish his course with joy !" And such a death all should supremely desire, and aim to attain unto.

But how can we make our life thus end? Are such deaths the sovereign vouchsafements of God's grace, irrespective of the life and character of those who die them? We think not. We believe men generally die as they live. If any die a safe, triumphant death, after having lived wicked lives, they are the exception to, and not the rule of the divine arrangement. The Scriptures and experience go to shew that there is the same connexion between a religious life and a victorious death, that there is between sowing and reaping. Mark how clearly the apostle Peter states the connexion between eminent piety in life and a happy death. "For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Now, this abundant entrance, which means a happy, glorious death, depends upon doing certain things the apostle had mentioned. What are those things? Why, the adding to our "faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." In other words, a triumphant admission into the heavenly world when we die is conditioned on high attainments in personal religion; and the man

ner in which Bible-saints have lived and died shews the position of the apostle to be true. Who "was translated that he should not see death?" Enoch, who, while living, walked with God. Who was carried up to heaven by a whirlwind? Elijah, who made God and His cause all and in all. Who, in the trying hour, "fell on sleep?" David, who, while living, "served his own generation by the will of God." Whom did God dismiss from the work of life by telling him, "Go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days?" Daniel, who amid all the darkness, corruptions, trials, and temptations of a heathen court, remained the scrupulous servant and representative of God. Who exclaimed, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word?" Simeon, who "was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel." Who, when stoned to death, "saw the Lord Jesus standing on the right hand of God," and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit?" Stephen, a man "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." Who, in his seventy-fifth year, in the near prospect of a cruel death, exultingly exclaimed, "I am ready to be offered up;" "I know whom I have believed;" "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of

righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day?" Paul, who of all whose names shine in the annals of redemption, trod most closely in the footsteps of his Master. Who, when entering the dark valley, exclaimed, "I am going to Mount Zion! I am going to the city of the living God!" "I swim in a river of pleasure! I swim in a flood of glory?" Edward Payson, one of the brightest exemplifications of modern Christianity. And to mention but one more—out of the twice ten thousand whose passage into eternity has been flooded with light and glory—who was it that recently said, while dying, "For more than forty years I have so ruled my life that when death came I might face it without fear;" "I die happy and contented;" "Come, my son, see how a Christian can die?" It was General Havelock, who for more than forty years had victoriously fought the battles of his country and his God.

So then, Christian brother, would you, at life's close, have the monster fall stingless at your feet? would you die without a doubt of your final salvation? would you have angels unseen hover around your couch, and when the last breath is out, escort your spirit to Abraham's bosom? O then, live the Christian's life! Every

new attainment you make in holiness is but laying up for yourself a good foundation against the time to come. First of all, see to it that you have justifying faith; then think out, act out, live out, that faith: with your growth in years, grow in grace. In this way you will die safely, gloriously, and usefully.

Our closing plea is, that in living a holy life, we live for eternity. There are three questions that come home to us with the weight of a thousand worlds. First, Is there another life? Do we cease to be when we cease to breathe? There is, according to the plain teaching of the Scriptures, another state of being into which we enter at death, with all our powers unimpaired. Secondly, Has our manner of living in this life any connexion with our well-being in the life to come? Is there any known relation between the character we form on earth and the rewards we receive in heaven? There is. The Scriptures, with sunbeam clearness, tell us what we are to ~~do~~, and what we must be, in order to meet God in peace and inherit eternal life. Then, thirdly, What is it we must do, and what is it we must become, to secure the high rewards of grace after death? It is to be changed in our state, and be transformed in our natures and conduct into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

While our admission into heaven will be entirely on the score of grace, it is also true that our reward will be in proportion to our standard of holiness. Heaven is a world of supreme religious honour and enjoyment. Hence the higher the standard we reach here, the brighter our crown, and the greater the degree of our bliss there.

We trench, then, not in the least on the doctrines of grace, we write scripturally and reasonably, when we affirm that of all on earth, he is making the surest work for eternity who is the most religious in time. What other men do, as to their authors at least, either terminates with the brief day of this life, or follows them into eternity as sources of pain. All that statesmen, scholars, economists, warriors, poets, moralists, and philosophers are achieving, however useful to the world, is of no avail to their authors beyond the grave. If the enjoyments and employments of heaven consisted in the mere continuation of the different laudable enjoyments and employments of earth, then all ~~these~~ different classes would be transmitting a good influence for themselves beyond the grave. But heaven is not the abode for the learned, the sages, the poets, philosophers, patriots, the refined, and noble. It is a place where the redeemed meet

and receive the rich rewards of grace, where they have their every pain eased, their every pious desire fulfilled, their every religious hope realized, and their every religious sacrifice recompensed a thousand-fold. So that heaven is the perfection of the religion we commence on earth. And if this be so, then to reap the golden harvest of everlasting life there, we must sow to the Spirit here ; to wear the crown there, we must bear the cross here ; we must trust Christ implicitly, and imitate Him closely, in this world, to have a seat near His throne in that.

Would you then, Christian brother, make the most of this life for that? Would you make your manner of life tell for the good of others in this world, and be a safeguard to yourself against the evils of the world to come? Would you, in death, lay your head on the bosom of Christ without alarm? Would you, at the judgment-seat, hear the "Well done!" of the Judge, have Him single you out, amid the assembled universe, and confess you before His Father and His angels, welcome you into the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, and then in heaven occupy a seat and enjoy a bliss above the angels? Then make it the chief concern of every day to grow

in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Let the day on which some attainment in personal religion has not been made, be mourned over, and written down in the calendar of life, as a day lost.

THE END.

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